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Practice and Process: Skinner Releasing Technique and Making Dance for Performance and on Screen

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**Practice and Process:
Skinner Releasing Technique
and Making Dance for Performance
and on Screen**

Polly Hudson

**A thesis submitted in partial
fulfilment of the University's
requirements for the Degree of
Doctor of Philosophy**

2017

Abstract

This thesis is a study of a long-term artistic practice, and of the works in the accompanying portfolio of evidence. It considers practice as research, Skinner Releasing Technique, the work of Joan Skinner, and the history of Skinner Releasing Technique alongside its current applications and development.

Key elements of Skinner Releasing Technique are highlighted, including the terminology and language used, notions of being in process, of letting go, and of the importance of imagery in the technique.

Significant components of the research and artistic practice are examined. Each of the works in the portfolio is mapped chronologically, and the development of themes and practices as the research progressed is considered, with particular attention to the development of screendance within it.

Insights into specific choreographic practices are observed, including studio-based approaches, and thematic through lines.

Theoretical foundations and models are presented with an acknowledgement of phenomenological approaches, and an examination of phenomenology in Skinner Releasing Technique. The proposition of Skinner Releasing Technique as methodology for the creative process is explored, and techniques from visual art practices are emphasised. The differences and overlaps between Release and Releasing are examined, and there is debate of the possible challenges and limitations encountered as well as the future of contemporary dance as we move beyond post modernism. Dance and movement practices outside Skinner Releasing Technique that have been important are discussed.

A consideration of where the work sits in relation to the field is brought to light, and the work of contemporaries is observed. Important citations of the practice

and works are scrutinised. The contribution to knowledge that the work makes is offered, and specific elements of this are examined. These include the creation of novel artefacts through artistic outputs, the paradigm shift of dance technique into a creative methodology, and the intersections between dance and visual art.

Keywords:

Skinner Releasing Technique, Joan Skinner, screendance, somatic practices, Process, Release, Releasing, dance and visual art.

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Tread softly because you tread on my dreams (2005) [2] [Single screen work]

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URL link to Portfolio of Evidence

<https://vimeo.com/album/4653678>

password: pollyhudson

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Introduction

This thesis and the accompanying portfolio of evidence will show how the principles and practice of Skinner Releasing Technique (SRT) can be a way into making dance works. Joan Skinner talks about this in an interview, saying that ‘in Releasing, the imagination and the physical self are totally integrated in movement . . . thus technique and creative process are integrated in this technique’ (Skinner cited in Neuhaus 2010). My research aims to discover what that actually means in action and to, therefore, add to the current research about SRT whilst making a significant and original contribution to knowledge. Through the research, performances and artefacts presented in this thesis and portfolio of evidence, I ask questions about what the possibilities are for shifting the paradigm of SRT from one of a dance technique into a creative methodology and practice.

The accompanying portfolio of evidence consists of six dance pieces that are part of a larger body of works from nearly twenty five years of dance making (see Appendix 1). In order to understand the framework within which the portfolio of evidence is situated, it is important to offer a context by mapping my history in dance. It is noted that in a career in dance that spans over a quarter of a century, not all activities are included, rather, only the most pertinent information that relates to the development of the portfolio of evidence and the submitted works is selected.

My early encounters with dance included ballet classes as a child, and involvement with youth dance as a teenager. Aged sixteen I enrolled at London Contemporary Dance School¹, graduating in 1991 with a distinction in contemporary dance having spent the third year of my studies as a member of

the school's fourth year touring company 4D². Between 1991-1995 I engaged in study of Contact Improvisation³ and related dance material, developing an active role within that community, organising jams and becoming a board member of Chisenhale Dance Space in London⁴. During the same period I took classes in contemporary dance at the Holborn Centre, which was to become Independent Dance⁵, now housed at the Siobhan Davies studios, in London. Alongside these studies in dance I was also avidly attending dance performances and art galleries⁶. I worked in various dance companies⁷ and began to embark on my own choreographic practice.

In 1994 I encountered SRT, developed by Joan Skinner. This would prove to be a turning point in my development as a dancer, choreographer and teacher. I took weekly classes and attended numerous retreats and intensives, immersing myself in learning this work⁸. The combination of alignment techniques, movement, hands on work, and use of poetic imagery made complete sense to me. SRT would come to underpin my teaching and my artistic practice, and to influence me philosophically.

Practice as Research

This study is a reflection upon a previous artistic practice, framed within practice as research terms, but acknowledging that practice as research requires a question, asked in advance and investigated within academic boundaries. As the work in the portfolio develops and I learn more about scholarly conventions, practice as research does become a clearer term within which to describe the latter outputs and current/future ones.

There is potentially a tension between the artist/practioner and the academic.

However, the two are not necessarily at odds: it is clear that the artist is indeed a researcher, we need to value the artist as researcher, but a reframing of this research is necessary for it to be understood in academic terms.

Although a fairly new field of enquiry in the academy, practice as research is the method that many artist-scholars have been undertaking in their work for a considerable time. It is only relatively recently that it has become more widely articulated and acknowledged as reputable methodology, and it was not until the 1992 RAE⁹ that activities previously considered to be professional practice were legitimised as research (Niedderer & Roworth-Stokes 2007). In the last two to three decades, the idea that arts practice might be a form of research has been developing ascendancy (Smith & Dean 2009: 2). However, there are still potential challenges, particularly when practice as research takes place in the academy, as radical creativity can upset the traditional cultures of scholarship. By the twenty first century it became clear that practice as research had the potential to trigger fundamental and profound challenges to well-established paradigms of knowledge making, inside the academy and beyond (Kershaw 2009: 2). Although practice as research has had to fight for recognition, it can actually make a weighty contribution to the academy at large:

By teasing out this play of weakness from the 'inbetweenness' inherent in its [practice as research] 'object' of study, its disciplinary context and development, it inevitably challenges the extent to which abstraction as a principle underpins knowing in its own, and thence any other discipline, and reminds scholarship of its necessary dependence on and return to the everyday. For a founding principle of the academy has been abstraction; literally, to draw apart from.

(Jones 2009: 23)

Smith & Dean (2009: 1) suggest that there is a reciprocal relationship between research and creative practice. An artist therefore intuitively adopts the dual

roles of the researcher and the researched, with the process changing both perspectives because creative and critical enquiry is a reflective process (Sullivan 2009: 51). Dance is exceptionally fertile territory for practice as research, leaping across chasms that have previously separated disciplines and epistemologies (McKechnie & Stevens 2009: 86). This is particularly true of somatic approaches to dance making, as in my practice, and Nelson notes the unsustainability of the presumption of a binary division between the body and mind (Nelson 2013: 43) that is often located in some quantitative areas of research. This is further emphasised by the fact that neurobiological studies have resulted in the rejection of the body-mind duality and the embodied nature of feeling states and mental imagery have become more understood (Sullivan 2010: 131).

In his groundbreaking text illuminating practice as research, Nelson, discussing the sometimes complicated navigation of this approach within a body of artwork, tells us:

Artworks are often complex, multi-layered and resonant. Accordingly there are several possible lines of research inquiry . . . this is where, in the first instance a clue to the intended research inquiry is additionally needed . . . which indicates the line of inquiry upon which the candidate wishes to be assessed.

(Nelson 2013: 27)

Therefore, as my research has layers of inquiry and a number of elements, as outlined in Chapter Three, there are several lines of analysis that could be followed, but for the purposes of this thesis they have been pared away to identify the major components.

It is beneficial at this point to consider what research and a researcher is, and Hanstein offers a useful definition:

The researcher as scholar is someone who is on the leading edge of the field. He or she is able to synthesise ideas in new ways and see unique possibilities by considering not only what is, but what might be.

(Hanstein 1999: 22)

The term research is therefore being used to denote the systematic inquiry into the gaining of new knowledge (Niedderer & Roworth-Stokes 2007), which is apparent in this thesis and the accompanying body of work. It relates to the paradigm shift that I propose in identifying SRT as creative methodology as well as a dance technique, and which I have identified, researched and actioned inside my artworks.

Dance is by its very nature an ephemeral art form, and the documentation of it can sometimes be problematic. In my case this is simplified somewhat by the fact that many of the works in the portfolio of evidence are screen based, and are artefacts created through the medium of dance. Indeed, technology can reinforce the radical complimentary of performance and screen media research (Kershaw 2009: 06).

Joan Skinner

Joan Skinner (b1924) is an American dancer, choreographer and teacher. After early studies in dance with direct teaching lineage from Mabel Todd, author of 'The Thinking Body'¹⁰ and then at Bennington College in USA, she was a dancer with Martha Graham Company¹¹ from 1946, and later with Merce Cunningham¹². Skinner herself reports this time as being important in many ways, not least because she was introduced to Zen and to 'notions of the ego stepping aside, of "it" shooting—the arrow shoots; you don't shoot it' (Skinner cited in Neuhaus 2010). This practice of letting go and being present is fore fronted in Buddhism:

‘the discovery of space begins with shi-nè. Shi-nè is the practice of letting go of our addiction to the thought process’ (Chögyam & Déchen 1997: 38). The artist Bill Viola concurs and says that one of the great milestones of the twentieth century has been the transporting of Eastern knowledge to the West (Viola cited in Grontenhuis 2004: 162).

Skinner suffered a serious back injury whilst touring, and from 1955 she began to search for ways of engaging with her dancing that would allow for a long but uninjured career as a performer. These investigations led to studies in the Alexander Technique¹³, as well as to improvisational dance explorations with her graduate students at the University of Illinois, where she was by the early 1960’s, a faculty member. During the following years Skinner developed her ideas and practices. From 1967 Skinner led on the modern dance programme at the University of Washington, where she continued her work. Refinements of her technique into the pedagogy of SRT occurred predominately during that period, and in the early 1970’s.

Many influences can be seen within the technique including Skinner’s studies of ballet, Graham and Cunningham techniques, Alexander Technique, and dance improvisation. Also present are inspirations from poetry, Skinner was an avid reader of Emily Dickinson¹⁴ amongst others, and of Japanese poetry. Commentators on SRT note that ‘the images within the work tend to be expressed briefly and in simple words but at the same time they open up the imagination’ (Skinner cited in Neuhaus 2010).

There is a surprising lack of anatomical instructions in the pedagogy; rather, the experience for participants is fostered through the imagination, particularly with images drawn from the natural world. They are metaphorical in nature and

Skinner likens these to Haiku's calling them image clusters (Alexander 1999).

Skinner Releasing Technique now

SRT is now taught around the world and is widely acknowledged as having far reaching influence on contemporary dance. It particularly seems to have found a home in the UK and within British contemporary dance practices, evidenced by the fact that it has been embedded in British conservatoire and university dance trainings at influential institutions such as Trinity Laban and Coventry University since its introduction to the UK in 1993 by Gaby Agis¹⁵, who was my first teacher of the form.

Much of the reach of influence that SRT fosters has to date been focused on it as a dance technique and on how it can nurture creativity, 'as a movement practice that seamlessly fuses technique with the creative act, a two in one, a process of doubleness, neither only technique nor only spontaneous enquiry/creative exploration' (Skelton 2002). However, there is little literature that discusses what that means in detail.

Skinner Releasing Technique and me

In 2008 after nearly fifteen years of studying the work it was clear that a number of UK based dancers were ready to undertake certification for SRT, and it was proposed by the Skinner Releasing Institute, USA, that we brought the teacher training to the UK¹⁶. With the support of Coventry University the first UK based SRT teacher training certification began in 2009, and students from Australia, New Zealand, Italy, Austria and Finland joined the British students in graduation

from the programme in 2011. This meant that I became amongst one of approximately 25 certified teachers worldwide who were active in teaching SRT. I embraced the work wholeheartedly. I integrated it fully into the curriculum on the dance course at Coventry University¹⁷ where I was, at the time, co-course Director for Dance, as well as teaching the work to undergraduate and postgraduate acting students at Birmingham Conservatoire¹⁸ where I am currently Head of Movement. I also taught the work in regular open classes and workshops in the UK and internationally.

This period of study hugely informed my making and creative practice as I grew to understand even more deeply the principles and pedagogy of SRT. It opened up further possibilities in the use of imagery, and an acceptance of the option of letting go of preconceived notions of what the outcomes of dance works might be. I became profoundly immersed in the notion of process in my dancing; Robert Davidson (1946-2016) describes the nature of the Releasing process as change (Davidson 1979). In my teaching, and in the making of my dance works I am integrating and employing these principles at all times.

Unfolding is triggered by one's availability to letting go — not just the willingness to let go of bones and tissues, but the willingness to release preconceived notions, judgments, and expectations, as well.

(Metcalf 2004)

What follows will provide an insight into how SRT has informed, underpinned and supported my making. It will explore how these underpinnings can permeate creative acts, what the lived experience of that is, and it will offer possibilities of ways into accessing these approaches for the development of dance works.

1. Beyond Technique

Skinner Releasing Technique is a dance technique, but what of its application to creative practice and to making dance or other art works? As a dance technique SRT allows us to let go of holding and of habitual patterns, and to unveil possibilities both inside and outside the studio in our dancing and in our being. It also can stimulate the imagination in remarkable ways, and allow availability to letting go of preconceptions of who we are, in our moving, in our lives, and therefore in our creative self.

We often hear it said that SRT 'unleashes creativity' and in an internet search for SRT classes/workshops the word creativity will come up time and again in the descriptions. It is useful to define what this actually means, to consider the specific ways that this dance technique facilitates, supports and engenders creative practices, and in my instance, choreography and the art of making dances. SRT has been fundamental in my own creative process and in my making of dance works, both performative and for screen; and at times this has to do with direct application and use of some of the many images in the SRT pedagogy. SRT also supports my choreographic approach in other ways, and these methods into making dances have become a practice that includes many of the underlying principles of SRT. Alongside this are a number of key methodologies that are states of being, experienced through the practice of SRT.

Releasing is a multi faceted, multi-directional experience. And so these states of letting go, process, availability, imagery and allowing are intertwined and many layered. It fosters a non-linear and ever shifting process of change. We learn to become available to multiple states of being and alignment at once. The terms Release and Releasing are intertwined in contemporary dance practices, but it is

useful to be clear about the similarities and differences. This is explored later in Chapter Four.

1.1 Language

In SRT we have a very particular use of language. Much of it is embedded throughout this writing, sometimes identified as specific poetic images or instructions from the pedagogy; but also as a continual thread and approach to language. There are specific terms in SRT that are illuminated below, along with some of the key underlying principles in relationship to my own practice and making.

1.1.1 The importance of the gerund

In SRT the 'ing' is vitally important and gerunds appear throughout the pedagogy. This offers then a possibility that no state is fixed or finished and that we can be in a constant place of unfolding. A gerund is a noun formed from a verb, which refers to an action, process, or state. In English, gerunds end in 'ing', for example: moving, playing (Collins 2017).

In an SRT class the instructions and images are often in a gerund form, offering a clear indication that we are not searching for a finished mode of being, but rather that this practice is continual and on-going, rather like the peeling of the layers of a (never ending) onion.

1.1.2 Terminology

It is useful to illuminate some of the structure of SRT as well as the vocabulary within the form as the terminology is used frequently throughout this writing. In

the pedagogy that is SRT there are fifteen classes in the introductory series, and twelve in the on-going. There is also advanced work that is rarely taught and that Skinner did not formalise pedagogically. The pedagogy is highly developed dance technique and was refined over many years by Joan Skinner, and there are scripts for the classes, meaning that if a student attends class anywhere in the world the material they receive will be the same. The teacher training is intensive and takes place over two years, and only after a rigorous application process. Classes operate in sections, though are seamlessly weaved together so that the student often does not notice this. These sections are:

1.1.3 Check list

Usually received on the floor, this offers time to notice patterns of holding and possibilities to let it go:

Tissues of the throat can *soften*: tissues of the back of the neck can soften and become *supple*, allowing the skull to float a little, moving to feel its separation from the neck. Tissues along the shoulders can soften, softening into the arms, and the tissues along the arms can soften along those long bones of the hands. Tissues along the ribs softening over the bones. Tissues of the back, the *while* back, softening into the floor. Tissues of the legs can soften along those long bones towards the feet. And the breath continues to deepen in the torso, and deepen in the back . .

(Skinner 2011: class 2)

1.1.4 Movement study

A guided moving exploration, sometimes from an image, but not necessarily a deep state:

Let's spend a moment with a duet between the spaces at the hinges of the jaw and some other spaces in our awareness: perhaps the spaces of the spine – or the ribs – or the new spaces at the hips: the valley spaces! A

duet between the spaces at the hinges of the jaw and some other space in our awareness.

(Skinner 2011: class 7)

1.1.5 Image action

An image that moves one in some way (or not), commonly received after a check list and often in a deep image state:

And as we float in the sea of breath, perhaps we can spend a moment with a fanciful image that all of our bones can soften and float, and transform into soft, warm, sea sponges.

And that deep space of the solar plexus can transform into a nest of sea sponges as long, undulating seaweed.

This then becomes the dance, the dance of the bones floating as moist, warm, soft sea sponges, and the legs trailing from the nest of sea sponges as long . . . undulating . . . seaweed.

(Skinner 2011: class 5)

1.1.6 Totality

An image that does not move one externally, but allows a deep dropping into image, a letting go, and is always received lying on the floor. Totality Imagery is an image environment/metaphor that envelops the whole self in a deep state of transformed consciousness, and in which the whole psychophysical state changes along the lines of that specific suggestion:

The whole self can melt into the breath for a moment – and float in it.

And as we're floating in the breath- those spaces can begin to softly fall open, inward.

The spaces between the ribs deepen inward.

Valley spaces, softly falling open, and those spaces all along the spine, softly falling open, inward.

The bones can transform into soft shadows –

so our inner landscape becomes –

a lacy lattice of shadow and space –

and the breath can move into the lattice –

as white mist

(Skinner 2011: class 13)

1.1.7 Partner Graphic

A hands on study with a partner, usually in two's, but occasionally in a three, that offers a possibility for change. Graphics in SRT are a practice with a partner to aid alignment:

With my partner: the thumbs are right under the base of her skull, nudging, while the fingertips lightly support the skulls on the sides (around the ears). Thumbs nudging along the base of the skull; and then spend a moment nudging those tissues, first one thumb, and then the other. Be careful not to push the skull forward: we're loosening the base of the skull tissues, and suspending the skull – we're not pushing the skull forward. It's a delicate touch - it's subtle.

(Skinner 2011: class 1)

1.2 On Process

I have learnt many things from over two decades practice of SRT, from receiving and dancing the work, from the teaching of it, and from my deepening understanding of the pedagogy and what lies beneath it. One of the main things that I have discovered is its capacity for cultivating transformation and change. This can be a tricky thing to pin down and our understanding of process in SRT differs somewhat from the dictionary definition of the same word.

In an SRT class, we can be said to be in moments of process when the dance dances us. This is process on a simple level. For some this happens naturally, with ease. For others it comes upon us after time, often surprisingly. When we open ourselves up to the possibility of transformation then process begins.

Robert Davidson (1946-2016) speaks of this, and tells us:

Change is a product of the laws of disorientation and integration experienced during releasing. Disorientation of the self (confusion) allows for the union of opposites, of diverse and disparate segments of the whole self, which is integration. This is the process of allowing change to happen.

(Davidson 1979)

Process also has other ramifications. We may find ourselves questioning who and what we are. When our alignment begins to shift through this practice, sometimes we experience challenging emotional responses unfolding. We notice that in releasing patterns of holding and tension our notion of how we position ourselves shifts, not only in our own body but also in relationship to the world. Sometimes the holding in our body is a clever way of managing our life, meaning that our physical self holds and stores all that we have ever experienced. For some, this re-patterning unleashes emotional holding that has been cleverly stored in order to function in the world. This may manifest in elation, in illness or in upset, to name but a few possibilities.

If we look at Joan Skinner's definition of alignment in the Underlying Principles of SRT, then this parallel of letting go in our whole self becomes clearer. She talks of alignment and transparency, and not just in the terms that we usually understand alignment of the physical self in dance techniques:

Alignment- transparency

- a. Alignment then means more than alignment with the physical self. It is also with a larger reality – web patterns in the universe
- b. As the whole psychophysical self grows within this web like process, one gradually becomes transparent – opening up the channel of the life force.
- c. Then one is moved by that life force, which is larger than the self.

(Skinner 2010)

Process can be different on different days: we can find ourselves certain of the extraordinary nature of Releasing one day; and on the next find ourselves in resistance and wondering at the meaning of the form. These contradictions are part of being in process.

Being in process involves levels of listening, softening, and melting of the whole self, not just the physical self. We can witness our ego fall away somehow as we

find ourselves immersed in a dance that resonates through into the rest of our life, and returns somehow another time, unexpectedly. Ultimately, the process that permeates SRT is a wonderful gift.

When we discuss a choreographic process we are often and usually referring to the preparation of something, and to the procedures undertaken in order to achieve a goal. In SRT to be in process means something entirely different: it is a state of being which we enter into, and it is a continual, changing, unfixed state of unfolding and unknowing. It requires a great leap of faith.

And so in our making and choreographic processes we can be in process.

Process is more important than outcome. When the outcome drives the process we will only ever go to where we've already been. If process drives outcome we may not know where we're going, but we will know we want to be there.

(Mao 1998: 1)

The question remains though of what this means in action. It requires remaining in a mutable state of openness, the possibility of being open to the transformation a work may undertake as it becomes something entirely different during devising due to being in process. In the same way as the dance dances us when we are in Releasing class, the dance may dance us in our making: it finds it's own form, it's own manifestation. Sally Metcalf touches on this in her writing about process saying that:

The Releasing process unleashes ever more fully realised potential. The abandonment of restrictive habitual patterns and preconceptions liberates not only bones and tissues, but facilitates greater creative and imaginative freedom, subtlety, and authenticity.

(Metcalf 2004)

This is a mysterious place to be and requires trust and maturity, characterised perhaps by a willingness to embrace the unknown and to be available to sometimes surprising possibilities. It invites an approach that fosters the

choreographic beginnings as points of departure rather than as stimuli, and fundamentally, it requires openness to letting go.

1.3 On Letting Go

‘I suppose in the end, the whole of life becomes an act of letting go’ (Martel 2003: 117). Being in process requires a constant state of letting go and of availability. Letting go is a hallmark of SRT, and in the early days of studying the technique it is often experienced as a bodily state: letting go of physical holding and of hidden tensions. As we delve more deeply into the work, we notice that it is not restricted to the releasing of patterns of holding in the body, but also to our understanding of who we are. The letting go may begin to happen in our whole selves, and it becomes therefore a psychophysical state. This can spill over into our everyday lives; we may find ourselves letting go of people and situations that no longer nourish us, and openness to new ones. It is a never ending unfolding, there is always more to let go of, always a new day or moment in our body and our lives, our feelings. And in our creative activities we may find ourselves making decisions that we did not know were possible for us, the work often takes it’s own course.

In my own practice I often begin thinking that I am making a piece of work about one thing, and during creation it becomes something entirely different. An example of this is the film work *Tread softly because you tread on my dreams* (2005) [2] when I believed that I was making a piece of work about the joy of transformation. I spent considerable time in the studio examining this in movement. And yet in process the work that appeared became about something else, about longing and loss, fragility and melancholy. This emerged as if from

nowhere, much like the dances that we may experience in an SRT class. I was required to let go of my preconceived ideas and notions of what the work was, and could be, and to be in the creative act rather than occupied with end results. In SRT we practice effortless effort (Skinner 2011), allowing what is there to surface, rather than pushing it into fruition. This is true in terms of dancing in the technique class, but it can also spill over into a choreographic devising period as an approach and method. Joan Skinner speaks of this to Bettina Neuhaus in an interview and says:

A major key is the principle of allowing, instead of controlling to make something happen. . . Further, the technique encourages the allowing for “it” to move rather than the self making the move

(Skinner cited in Neuhaus 2010).

We bring our whole selves to this practise. Until relatively recently some dance training encouraged the principle of leaving oneself at the studio door, a characteristic of many dance studies historically, and thankfully this approach is no longer so prevalent. This notion never sat comfortably with me, even as a young dance student. Later, in SRT I found a dance technique that embraces the whole self, and it felt like coming home. SRT acknowledges our whole lived experience, including our darker sides as well as our joy in dancing, and in this way it is holistic. By integrating our physicality with the rest of our being, we ironically go beyond the body (Skura 1999: 6).

Consequently in SRT, as well as letting go of hidden physical tensions, we can also let go of preconceived ideas of who we are, and in the case of making dances, of what they might become. It requires an availability to change, and often a great leap of faith in unsettling or dark moments. And so availability to letting go of preconceptions of what the work may be is cultivated, of how it may manifest,

and what the end product/piece might be. Therefore in this way we have openness and a willingness to change: to change at any given moment, and a constant unfolding of images and movement, as Sally Metcalf states:

Unfolding is triggered by one's availability to letting go — not just the willingness to let go of bones and tissues, but the willingness to release preconceived notions, judgments, and expectations, as well.

(Metcalf 2004)

This sometimes means that we unravel, the sands shift beneath our feet, but with trust in process, we find solid ground again.

Kindness is not an underlying principle of SRT, but my experience is that the technique does teach us this, towards ourselves in the letting go and allowing, and then to others as a consequence. When it gets hard in a creative process, or we are stuck, we can acknowledge that we know enough to realise that it will come unstuck too, and we can be kind to ourselves in these moments. We can know that Releasing propels us forward whether we like it or not. It surprises us, in unexpected ways, sometimes in respects that we don't understand at the time, but always in ways that are necessary for us to grow, move on, create.

Writing at the end of class is a key feature of SRT, and requires us to let go of preconceptions of what may arise in those words. Sometimes there are no words, so drawings or marks appear, or perhaps the words arising may be non-sensical, seemingly random. In this letting go into writing we may find images from within the class and from other places inside of ourselves, falling onto the page. Our experience somehow becomes integrated and elucidated through our writing. I play with this in the performance and film work *i feel a . . .* (2003) [1] and it became a key part of the piece: words arriving on the page in front of me as well as being available for the audience to witness.

Figure 1. *i feel a . . .* (Hudson, P. 2003)
Image by Luras Wiggan, O.

The piece concludes with a camera over my shoulder as I engage in stream of consciousness writing, which is projected in real time onto a large screen at the back of the space¹⁹. The audience simultaneously witnesses me as performer in the immediate visceral process of writing, and see the words appearing. In this way letting go and process enters into performance, the images and words spill forth. And so it can be when we make other works too, the images unfold of their own volition somehow, whether danced or written.

1.4 On Imagery

SRT can be always with us. The graphics, movement studies, image actions, and totalities can become a fundamental part of our lives, as well as functioning as an integral part of any devising period in a variety of ways, underpinning and supporting the development of ideas, movement and choreographic endeavors.

Constituents from the pedagogy of SRT arise in numerous places in my own practice: the graphics are ever present, for example the skulls strings continually inform my alignment, the torso suspension allows length without pulling up or holding on, the prominent vertebra falling down inside the back, and multiple others. These become, with continual practise of SRT, ways of being, constant companions.

We can become the image and the image is no longer an external thing, but rather something that we blend with, that then dances us. The images in SRT move us, sometimes in unexpected ways.

Kirsty Alexander illuminates this, and says:

We do not imagine Joan's images; we merge with them, they become another reality. We experience them at a level just beyond our conscious control . . . The images are poetic -Skinner likens them to Haikus - and metaphorical in nature.

(Alexander 1999)

Some materials have been removed from this thesis due to Third Party Copyright. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.

Specific image actions from SRT appear in many places in my pieces, as do some of the totalities. In *Multiple Body* (2007) [4] I play with the image of gossamer threads, which also appears in other works.

Delicate gossamer threads appear, wrapping themselves around the base
of the middle finger of each hand, drawing the arms into play
(Skinner 2011: class 4.)

Cultivating freedom of the breath is also key for me, and very important in both dancing explorations as well as in devising periods. It allows space for waiting for the work to come through into movement, room for ideas to come through into fruition, scope for reflection, and space for understanding what is emerging. In *Vis-er-al* (2015) [6] I play directly with the breath, and it is slowed down in the film piece, allowing the witness to experience their own breath in some way perhaps.

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Figure 3. *Vis-er-al* (Hudson, P. 2015)

The breath is our constant companion

(Skinner 2011: class 2)

Alongside specific images from the pedagogy appearing in my choreographies, the practice of SRT, and its continual use of poetic images can allow the fostering of our own imagery to develop. Meaning that as we become aware of the imagery in SRT and accustomed to playing with poetic images, we may find that in our dancing in different contexts other images arise, as if from nowhere, and move us, somehow.

This cultivation of openness to imagery enables a sophisticated way of approaching choreography as it allows what is hidden or unknown to us to surface. Sometimes an image from the pedagogy of SRT is the point of departure and another flows or expands from there. An example of this is:

curling and uncurling the spine.
window like spaces between the vertebrae,
OPENING

all else hangs and flows

(Hudson 2011)

There is also something deeply supportive about the stillness that we encounter in SRT for allowing movement or an image to arise. Many moments of being on the floor feature in SRT, when we may be offered a checklist, an image action, or a totality; the waiting and allowing an image to move us (or not), is a reassuring and supportive practice.

At the still point of the turning world. Neither flesh nor fleshless;
Neither from nor towards; at the still point, there the dance is.
(Elliot 1935)

1.5 On Time

You have to give yourself time. Just as Releasing doesn't happen overnight, so too this is the case when making dances. It is an on-going practice. It often takes me about a year to make a new work, sometimes much longer. *Making Lemonade* (2013) [5] for example, was inspired by images in a letter from a friend some ten years previously that I had noted in journals and knew I would come back to later. I'm aware that this is a poor fit with current funding opportunities, and the fast paced world in which we live, but there it is: it usually takes me a considerable amount of time.

Alongside this is the possibility that it can also be instant. This appears to be contradictory, but it is entirely in keeping with SRT principles: we acknowledge both of these things simultaneously and multi-directionally, that Releasing is an ever unfolding state of being that is a lifetimes work, and that also it can happen instantly. Instant letting go. Instant availability. Instant moving.

So these two things sit alongside each other: accepting time and space, and the necessity of having deep patience. Allowing images to arise, playing with them and moving in the studio, writing, moving some more, and on and on. Not forcing or pushing the work into fruition, but knowing it will come in its own good time and allowing space for images to arise. And then, often, the last part of this process of making is relatively rapid for me, but as a consequence of the long period of, let's call it, research, or contemplation, a considerable engagement in process.

And of course we all find our own way, mine is by no means definitive, but perhaps we can be patient, know that it is all there, it just needs time. Trust in your deep knowing and your innate creativity. And then be prepared to allow the

instant nature of it to come through after all of that processing. Kirsty Alexander²⁰ eloquently describes this:

In fact there is no need to try and push the body beyond its limits, no adherence to a principle of overload as a necessary tool. The belief is in precisely the opposite - you can't make a leaf grow by stretching it.
(Alexander 1999)

I often feel I don't have another work in me when one is completed. And then a new work arises somehow. I have become accustomed to this, and still don't know where the next will come from. But we can let it go, the worrying, pushing and searching and trust that it will come through.

Allowing is an underlying principle of SRT, and encompasses being available to an integration of technique and creativity. Returning to Joan Skinner's own writing, she tells us:

Allowing

- a. Allowing something to happen rather than controlling to make something happen is a major key to this technique.
- b. To allow, one has to practise letting go- letting go of preconception-letting go of anticipation- to just be there.
- c. Allow change to occur in the physical self- change to occur in one's identity.
- d. Allow for the unexpected.
- e. Allow for the releasing of fixed states of being- the releasing of the imagination-
- f. Allow for an image to transform the whole self. Poetic imagery is utilised as a metaphor for the kinaesthetic experience. Since it kindles the imagination, there is integration of technique and creative process.

(Skinner 2010)

2. I did this, then this, then this: a chronology of the works

The development of the portfolio of evidence is mapped here chronologically and shows the maturation of the practice. The outputs are linked sequentially within my artistic practice and each one points the way to the next stage in the overall choreographic process. The body of work presented is responding to lived experience and foregrounding some of the philosophical approaches in this area of research, which will be explored more fully in Chapter Four. Primary themes within the work are outlined below and the underpinnings relating to these are examined in detail in Chapter Three.

2.2 i feel a . . . (2003) [1]

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This piece was a continuation of earlier choreographic explorations into sharing kinaesthetic empathy with the audience and was achieved through the use of film (video) projection, which the first time this appears in my work. It premiered at Trinity Laban, London, during the Skinner Releasing Easter School alongside works by two other artists who also cite SRT as fundamental to their practice: Florence Peake and Lionel Popkin²¹.

2.2 Tread softly because you tread on my dreams (2005) [2]

This is my first complete screendance work and was made during a three-year period of research²² through the medium of somatics²³ including Body Mind Centering²⁴ (BMC). It also served to investigate and integrate the processes and approaches that I was utilising from SRT as I was engaged in a serious study of the form at this time, which was of deep influence.



Figure 5. *Tread softly because you tread on my dreams* (Hudson, P. 2005)

The film works directly with some of the alignment images from SRT. Examples of this include: supple feet from class one, the ever-present skull strings, and the prominent vertebrae falling into the back (Skinner 2011: class 9), which can be seen throughout.

The process for this work shows clearly how my practice of the underlying principles²⁵ of SRT (see Appendix 2) were employed. Particularly the principle of allowing: ‘allowing something to happen rather than controlling to make something happen is a major key to this technique’ (Skinner 2010). This is evidenced in the fact that initial and extensive studio based research for the work involved much investigation into the symbolic use of butterflies across cultures as well as movement explorations of transformation, for example the chrysalis into the butterfly. However other themes began to emerge as the process progressed and it became clear that the piece was about loss, desire and fragility, so employing principles from SRT: ‘to allow, one has to practise letting go, letting go of preconception-letting go of anticipation, to just be there’ (Skinner 2010.).

2.3 Let me count the ways (2006) [3]

This work sees a return to the theme of a live performance piece with video projection as seen initially in output [1]. It continues to explore practices that have been revealing themselves in the previous works, particularly the use of hands on bodywork as source and support, and the underlying principles of SRT.

The ensuing *Love Letter* (Hudson 2006) is the first of my works to present a re-iteration of a previous piece in a different format, a theme that develops as the practice grows over the following years. In it I take the film element of the

original work, re-editing and utilising previous unused footage to develop a single screen dance film that stands alone as a work as/in itself. Some of the reasons for this were to revisit and utilise previously discarded film material, and in part it was because it makes for easier dissemination of the work to a wider audience.

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Figure 6. *Let me count the ways* (Hudson, P. 2006)
Image by Luras Wiggan, O.

Over 15,000 people subsequently viewed the piece online. In later works this device meant that pieces could be distributed worldwide to international dance and dance film festivals, which became of an increasingly high profile nature as the research developed.

2.4 Multiple Body (2007) [4]

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Figure 7. *Multiple Body* (Hudson, P. and Watt, Z. 2007)

In 2007 I was commissioned by Fracture, West Midlands, to make a new dance film installation in collaboration with the artist Zena Watt²⁶, to be shown at Vivid Projects²⁷, Birmingham. *Multiple Body* (2007) [4] was a three-screen installation that was developed over eighteen months through the Fracture programme. In *Multiple Body, a continent of skin* (2008) there is again a second iteration of a work so that it could be widely distributed as a single screen film, in order to utilise some unused footage. Yasmeen Baig Clifford, director of Vivid Projects commissioned the single screen work. This was a curator/artist relationship that was to mature in the coming years with further commissions and funding.

2.5 Making Lemonade (2013) [5]

In between devising *Multiple Body* (2007) [4] and *Making Lemonade* (2013) [5] I underwent the teacher certification training for SRT from 2009-2011 and as a result the processes, principles and material of the technique became even more integrated in my practice, and in my research. There were also some other works in the intervening years.²⁸



Figure 8. Making Lemonade (Hudson, P. 2013)

In *Making Lemonade* (2013) [5] the format of multiple screen installation is seen again. The piece is a three-screen work, and continues the use of iconic images, on this occasion, lemons.

The peel is thick and it comes away easily in
one.
coiled.
piece.
throw it over your shoulder and it gives the name of the one
you will marry.
ever tried eating a lemon?
it is in segments and looks delicious.
like an orange perhaps.

and it is tart. so tart.
its
opening
pieces
like the falling open of my heart

(Hudson 2003)

Making Lemonade#2 (2015) is another example of a work that finds a second iteration of an installation piece, again as a single screen dance film that can be more easily distributed than an installation so that it can reach a wider audience.

2.6 Vis-er-al (2015) [6]

In 2015 I was invited by the director of Vivid Projects Yasmeen Baig Clifford to convene a three-day salon for their season '9evenings Redux'.²⁹ The original '9evenings' (New York 1966) featured work by many artists who have been of great influence on my practice including Steve Paxton, Deborah Hay, Yvonne Rainer and the associated Judson Dance Theater ³⁰, a group who radically questioned dance aesthetics (Banes 1993: xi).

I invited other artists³¹ to show work and there was a lab, discussions, classes and performances. I made particular reference to Yvonne Rainer's 'No Manifesto' (Rainer 1965) ³², her revised 'No Manifesto' (Rainer 2008) written in later years as a response to the earlier text, and the 'Yes Manifesto' (Tufnell et al 2013).

Particularly resonant for me is:

Yes to the body as portal to memories, histories and worlds of
imagination, yes to letting form emerge unpredictably out of process, yes
to engaging with metaphor and the poetics of experience

(Tufnell et al 2012)



Figure 9. *Vis-er-al* (Hudson, P. 2015)

These yes affirmations relate precisely to SRT and it's ethos of allowing what is present in our psychophysical selves to be revealed in our moving.

I continued to engage with the principles of SRT, and also worked directly with some of the image actions from SRT classes in the piece, including: 'Delicate gossamer threads attach themselves to the base of the middle finger of each hand, drawing the arms into play' (Skinner 2011: class 4).

2.7 Live Performance and Screendance

There are threads running through this body of work in terms of the creative process: how it developed, progressed and grew over time. Processes and ideas became refined and clarified, and the practice developed a clear voice both in respect to the underpinning approach of the principles of SRT, and the works produced. There are also themes that emerge through the development of the

works in the portfolio around live performance practice and screendance. Early works prior to those discussed here were all live performances, and as the practice develops through this portfolio we can see how my interest in screen based work progresses and matures, from initial experiments in video projection during live performance, through to single screen works, and then developing into multiple screen installations.

i feel a . . . (2003) [1] contains my first use of film³³, which features alongside live performance, and sets the pathway for future works in the medium of screendance. A section of *i feel a . . .* (2003) [1] is a video of the performer slowly turning, and was born out of a desire to show the audience the body in close up, for them to share the delicacy of the kinaesthetic experience of the dance. This is a theme that reoccurs in later works³⁴ and can be characterised as a dance that initiates a critique of representation by insisting on the still, on the slow (Lepecki 2006: 45). At this point in the research it was an experiment in witnessing³⁵ movement rather than any particular technical desire in film making, and related the experience of witnessing my own movement through film to an audience.

Following the production of *i feel a . . .* (2003) [1] I was interested to continue explorations in using a camera. I had limited previous experience of working with film, and no technical skills in the area, so it was a learning curve that would continue over the next decade. My desire was to work with allowing the audience to see the body close up which is something that is not possible in live work, and this can be likened to the kinaesthetic sense of multi-directional awareness that is key in SRT. Using film seemed to solve the dilemma I was encountering, of wanting the audience to have a kinaesthetic experience that was on a par with the performer's. This was explored more fully in later works such

as *Multiple Body* (2007) [4], and arguably with greater success, as my technical skills improved.

In a process that was akin to my improvisational movement practice, I was developing a new language for the moving image on camera, and whilst working on *Tread softly because you tread on my dreams* (2005) [2] was experimenting with the notion of editing as choreography, which Hargraves describes:

Choreography is an art of improvisation. A choreographer takes an idea into the studio- maybe a piece of music or text or just a vague concept- and starts moving through space. Popular film making, traditionally, is an art of preconceived ideas. Usually a filmmaker has a script or a storyboard before he or she shoots the first scene.

(Hargraves 2003: p163)

Editing as choreography is a term I began to use at this point. Rather than employ traditional filmic techniques, of working with a storyboard that would map in advance what the structure of a work is, I utilised practices from improvisational movement techniques, particularly SRT, in order to create the work. This meant therefore that any film sequences emerged in a similar way to the manner in which the creation of live performance material does.

During the making of *Multiple Body* (2007) [4] my technical knowledge was increasing as I began to learn about camera and editing techniques, and I was starting to have a clearer understanding of making screendance. It was shot on super8 film³⁶ and this choice was for a number of reasons, including the fact that it has a kinaesthetic nature and quality to it both in projection and in process, which relates to the physical embodiment that I was researching in the movement material and in the set up for the showing of the work.

Making Lemonade (2013) [5] was the first piece in which I worked with film quality cameras, and I employed a camera operator who had technical knowledge that I lacked. I knew what I wanted to achieve artistically, but from this point on I bought in people with technical skills that I did not have in order to achieve my artistic desires. The piece uses stop frame animation and the fruit in the centre screen of the installation version was filmed over a period of six weeks. In common with *Multiple Body* (2007) [4] the work was lit by theatre lighting designers in order to remove any sense of the body in site. I had experimented with a green screen, and with other postproduction effects to suspend the body in darkness, but decided upon all lighting to happen during production as it offers a different and more kinaesthetic quality to the end result. The single screen dance film *Vis-er-al* (2015) [6] continues to examine getting close in to the body and notions of the body as landscape; again I utilised the absence of any background to highlight the body in motion as described by Hetty Blades:

She appears to be in a type of shoulder-stand, but is in fact filmed from above, with her head hanging over her legs. It is hard to tell this at first, partly due to her suspension in the weightless space of the black screen. With nothing to indicate a floor, ceiling or walls, the body floats. Her back and pelvis form an abstract, mushroom-like shape, which is not immediately recognizable as a body

(Blades 2017)

The piece is of a very high technical quality, something I had been increasingly exploring and was shown in *Multiple Body* (2007) [4] and *Making Lemonade* (2013) [5]. It uses FS700 slow motion cameras, the movement unfolds in in slow motion, the momentum of [my] long hair implies a sense of haste that does not match the speed of the film (Blades 2017). I worked with an experienced director of photography, Matthew Beckett,³⁷ and in raising the technical quality

of the work I was able to further show the detail and subtlety of movement, and of water.

In line with previous works it draws on my own lived experience, in this instance exploring trauma on the body and psyche in response to being involved in two serious road traffic accidents; the slow motion technology was very useful for this as it echoes the sensation of time slowing down during traumatic experiences. Writing about the piece, Blades illuminates this:

The relationship between the camera, the movement, and the music generate a sense of foreboding or trauma. The short, fragmented shots, deep-breathing, and off-balance camera-work all contribute to a sense that Hudson is experiencing something upsetting . . . the slow-motion effect, rotation of the camera and the fast-paced editing combines with the movement to generate a sense of unease and trauma.

(Blades 2017)

We can see then how the pieces developed chronologically, and what the logical progression in the choreographic practice was as the portfolio developed, particularly in relationship to my deepening understanding of SRT. We can also see how the screen based works increased in technical quality as my skills in that area expanded.

3. What are the underpinnings and commonalities? Making sense of the links between the works

There are underpinning practices that contributed to the development of the works, and these are outlined here. Some of these links are studio-based practices, some are thematic similarities, and some are methodologies. There are also overlaps, though for the purposes of this evaluation I attempt to separate them out appropriately. Practices and themes are illuminated below and offer a through line and synthesis of the research. Methodological approaches are explored more fully in Chapter Four.

The majority of these areas within my own practice can also be found in SRT, whether explicitly or implicitly, and the relationship to SRT will be highlighted and illuminated.

3.1 Studio practices

3.1.1 Improvisation:

Improvisation remains one of the mainstays of my practice; I have always understood my dancing much more fully through improvisational approaches to movement than through set pieces³⁸. Blom and Chaplin offer a useful explanation of dance improvisation:

Dance improvisation fuses creation with execution. The dancer simultaneously originates and performs movement without pre-planning. It is thus creative movement of the moment. It is a way of tapping the stream of the subconscious without intellectual censorship, allowing spontaneous and simultaneous exploring, creating and performing.

(Blom and Chaplin 2000: x)

Somatic practices³⁹ are fundamental to this process, as are significant influences from post-modern dance including Contact Improvisation and its related body based practices, as well as solo improvising. Steve Paxton⁴⁰ describes contact

improvisations as spontaneous physical dialogues that range from stillness to highly energetic exchanges; alertness is developed in order to work in an energetic state of physical disorientation (Paxton 1979). Authentic Movement⁴¹ practice, and the way it allows for our stories to be revealed through improvised movement also plays a role. I have studied with notable teachers in these areas and have gone on to develop my own methods into ways of moving and devising. Improvisation is a key component of SRT; it could be argued that the whole of the technique is improvised. The teacher offers students clear instructions, but how they move this directive is open to their own interpretation. This is one of the reasons that I was so drawn to the work: it is a codified and highly evolved dance technique, but within it there is space for free dancing, improvisation and ones own movement expression. In the early 1960's as she was developing her technique Skinner 'taught experimental classes in which she began to evolve her own distinctive approach to movement training, which often included improvisational tasks' (Skinner Releasing Network 2016). We do not talk specifically in terms of improvisation in an SRT class, but it is essentially what is happening. The work is non hierarchical, there are no set steps to learn, and it is accessible to all, unlike many other modern dance techniques.

Improvisation plays a part in every one of my works, whether it be in performance such as during *i feel a . . .* (2003), [1] and *Let me count the ways*, (2005), [3], or in process and in filming for the screen works in this portfolio.

Improvisation is a tool in my working practice, and a source for choreographing. As Miranda Tufnell states so well: 'Improvisation as a source generates material, which, in its complexity and unexpectedness, could never be planned or arrived at by logical means' (Tufnell & Crickmay 1993: 194)

3.1.2 'Other' for making solos

Another practice that I have developed is that of the presence of other in my solo working process. It can be a challenging time to be in a studio, alone, and finding ways to locate material. I initiated this area of the research in 2002 when I was working in the studio with Florence Peake⁴² developing an on-going research practice of working together in the same space, but on solo material.⁴³ This continued then the exploration inviting 'other' in to support the process of making solo material whether that other be another person, or a supporting practice such as SRT. I have continued to call on the support of others whilst making my work. This is a different practice from collaboration as outlined below.

This use of 'other' manifests in a variety of ways, and has a number of functions. A commonly used term is an outside eye for a person who comes into the devising process to help a (dance) artist with their work. I prefer the term witness, as it gives a slightly different flavour to the interaction and relationship between myself and the other person and is similar to the role of witness in an Authentic Movement practice. Natalie Garrett Brown describes my relationship with this: 'Hudson states that despite often making solos she actively invites others into her process, in order that they can function "as a witness" ' (Garrett Brown 2007: 202). This is a practice that I also engage in myself for others as I often receive requests to be a mentor or outside eye. I am developing a piece of research and a practice around this with a working title of 'The Artist Midwife'.

'Other' can also refer to supporting underpinning practices as well as a physical presence. Therefore, SRT also is other for me during the making periods and it underpins and supports creativity and choreography. Furthermore in SRT

classes we work with hands on graphics with a partner, and with practise it is possible to give the graphics to oneself through engaging a memory or recollection of what receiving the graphic was like. I am working with the somatic, with embodiment, and have found that one of the best ways in to contact that, and to access my creativity, is through touch. Examples of this include 'phantom hands nudging us' (Skinner 2011: class 4), and the torso suspension (Skinner 2011: class 3). The technique also offers support and holding through the underlying principles such as allowing and availability.

3.1.3 Writing

Listening through the body brings up words and images we did not know were there. We let them find their own way onto the page, playing with the feel of their resonances and associations . . . we welcome whatever words and images arrive onto the page . . . The images that emerge gather their own sense as we write. Our writing may be fluent or clumsy, abundant or brief, poetic or plain. We have to assume it will be the necessary expression for this moment. To stumble or stutter may be as eloquent and necessary as to sing.

(Tufnell & Crickmay 2004: 63)

I have always written: poetry and stories as a child, and expansive diaries as a teenager. It seemed a natural and unassuming step to morph into creative artistic journals as an adult. I have boxes and bookshelves full of them, mapping my history and development as an artist. They serve a number of purposes: they track and record my processes, and they offer possibilities for material that I did not recognise but was there under the surface. The writing takes on a variety of forms and I have developed a style of journaling that is uncensored and without fear, learnt from stream of consciousness writing during SRT classes, which Rebecca Skelton (1968-2005) describes:

Writing/reflection is also part of every Skinner class, where students are encouraged to continue their process from the moving body to the page in whatever form they feel is appropriate.

(Skelton 2002)

This writing technique was also developed in my own studio dancing, accompanied by sporadic drawings. It is a form of writing that is poetic and laced with metaphor and feeling. A requirement for entry onto the SRT teacher training programme is 'a background in poetry, or an introductory course in poetry that includes learning about the function of imagery and the resonance of words' (Skinner Releasing Institute).

I always map my choreographic and devising process in journals, working stuff out. Sometimes I have snippets of ideas for pieces that I write about and the work appears later, one, two or even ten years after the initial inspiration. During the process of making a piece there is a relationship between moving and writing: moving, writing, musing, moving more, and so the circle continues.

Writing has also appeared in my performance practice, for example in *i feel a . . .* (2003) [1] the piece concludes filming of me engaged in stream of consciousness writing, which is projected in real time onto a large screen at the back of the space. In this way the audience simultaneously witnesses me as performer in the immediate visceral process of writing, and see the words appearing. Natalie Garrett Brown describes being an audience member of this work:

Hudson, who performs the self-authored solo, pauses to engage in a moment of free writing, an on-stage camera capturing and relaying on the cyclorama behind the content of writings. Best described as direct responses to and associations with the experience she has just engaged in, the structure and content of the writing belies the linear and logical thereby foregrounding the experiential aspects of the performance. This section closes the piece, Hudson exiting while the camera remains on the writing for the audience to read.

(Garrett Brown 2007: 224)

The title for the piece is drawn from stream of consciousness writing, a technique employed in SRT, that I utilised comprehensively during the choreographic process, and is an integral part of my research and practice.

(when I hear the name of my beloved)
I feel a creeping sense come over me
I feel a delicate movement running through my fingers and my bones
(Hudson 2003)

Text played an important part in the development of *Tread softly because you tread on my dreams* (2005) [2], both my own writing and that of others. The title arose halfway through the process in an unrelated workshop with Miranda Tufnell⁴⁴, and is from the poem by WB Yeats⁴⁵. For *Let me count the ways* (2006) [3] I worked once again with text, both my own and that of others, and the title came once more from poetry, this time from Elizabeth Barrett Browning⁴⁶.

During the devising period for *Vis-er-al* (2015) I attended SRT classes with Gaby Agis and notes from my writing at the end of the sessions became important in the process:

Valley spaces
solar plexus
hinges of jaw
space inside the skull opening-
pool – skull slips and splashes in the pool. tiny slips and tiny splashes
this is old and ancient, but new to be surfacing again
oh- so the crash brings up old habits perhaps-
trauma unearthing, digging, mining, rustling, disturbing.
It's like a burglary. wanting. Something.
Something. Slipping away, just out of reach
changing forms. changing relationship with form.
slippery eel, slips through fingers, evades me.
slipping, sliding, just about
holding on.
(Hudson 2015)

3.1.4 Image

When using the term image in this context I am not referring to a painting, photograph or representational picture. Rather, this is a word commonly used in dance improvisation especially in SRT to describe a conjuring up of an image in the mind's eye that then moves one in some way. It is somewhat like a dream state. Writing about mental imagery Nigel Thomas illuminates this:

Mental imagery (varieties of which are sometimes colloquially referred to as “visualizing,” “seeing in the mind's eye,” “hearing in the head,” “imagining the feel of,” etc.) is *quasi-perceptual experience*; it resembles perceptual experience, but occurs in the absence of the appropriate external stimuli. It is also generally understood to bear *intentionality* (i.e., mental images are always images *of* something or other), and thereby to function as a form of mental representation. Traditionally, *visual* mental imagery, the most discussed variety, was thought to be caused by the presence of picture-like representations (*mental images*) in the mind, soul, or brain.

(Thomas 2014)

Imagery can vary in SRT from simple images that shift alignment such as ‘clusters of strings attach themselves to either side of the skull and go way out into space’ (Skinner 2011: class 1), so floating the skull, to the much more immersive experiences that are totalities. Joan Skinner discusses the development of these within the pedagogy of SRT via influences from poetry saying:

When I went to graduate school I took a course in Japanese literature and I was introduced for the very first time to the Japanese haiku. That just struck me right away. I collected these different haikus, and there you have the brevity and the sort of reverberations that come from it. The haiku has been a huge influence on the shaping of my image clusters.

(Skinner cited in Neuhaus 2010)

Poetic imagery can be very powerful. Poetry grabs us by the jugular. Far from being cosmetic language, it is intestinal. A metaphor is a remarkable kind of formation, because it both means what it says and what it doesn't say. So those

two things come together, and it creates an imagination which is active. You're not trying to figure things out; you're trying to enter into what's there. (Peterson 2016).

At times in my choreographic processes and in performance I use images that have arisen during my own creative process in the studio. Both *i feel a...* (2003) [1] and *Let me count the ways* (2006) [3] have scores that consist of a series of images. Sometimes images come directly from SRT. An example of this is in *Vis-er-al* (2015) [6] when I play with a variety of images drawn from the pedagogy.⁴⁷ Images can transform us and move us in some way, allowing an image to move you rather than moving yourself (Lepkoff 1999). Skinner explains this when she says:

The individual receives the image and the energy inside it, and then eventually one merges with an image and becomes transformed by it. This becomes another reality. It becomes so real that one can become the image.

(Skinner cited in Neuhaus 2010)

3.1.5 Scoring

I like to perceive of scoring in my works and processes as giving boundaries and support to improvised dancing. The work therefore becomes simultaneously both improvised and set. It is set work as the score, or rules, are very clear and it is improvised because within that score, or list of rules/direction/images, what arises is different each time. Though an improvisation by definition emphasises process, and performance by definition emphasises product, improvisation in performance is one instance where process becomes product (Blom and Chaplin 2000: 119). This fluidity and interconnectedness between process and product is of upmost interest and importance in my research.

It could be argued that in an SRT class we are continually working with scores. The teacher offers us an image, an action or a theme to play with and this becomes our score for moving for that period of time. For live performances I develop scores that include a variety of images and ideas. The score is often a combination of elements such as spatial, image, and action. For instance the opening section of the score for *i feel a . . .* (2003) [1] illustrates this: '1. A slow roll on the diagonal . . . the earth rises up to support me. The skin as the largest organ. I am rolling across the continent of skin' (Hudson 2002). As we can see, there is an element of spatial direction from one corner of the performance space to another; a timing direction: the roll is slow; and images: both of which are physical in this instance.

These images, actions and directions arise out of improvisations in rehearsal/process and are refined through repetition, writing and reflection. The challenge is to carry this through in the more sustained context of performance. As an image develops it becomes itself a landscape, events become more articulated and imagery intensifies (Tufnell & Crickmay 1990: 194).

i feel a . . . (2003) [1] developed over time, and altered between performances through refining material, and reflecting on changes necessary in between sharing's of the work. A score⁴⁸ was established and the specific movement material differed between presentations. Many dance artists in the field of improvisation work with scores and of note is the work of Deborah Hay⁴⁹. In 'My Body, the Buddhist' (Hay 2000) she maps the score for her piece 'Voila' (1995).

It often takes me a year to make a dance work; Deborah Hay concurs and says she needs a minimum of six months to choreograph a solo (Hay 2000). *i feel a . . .* (2003) [1] was made over the period of a year through a process of moving in

the studio, writing, moving more, and reflecting; it is a circle of practice that continues to be the underpinning for the way in which I research and make work, and it takes time. Natalie Garrett Brown references my approach to this, writing:

There is recognition that given time a dance performance will emerge from a process of exploration. However working this way requires time in order that negotiation, the sharing of practice and the trying of mooted ideas and processes can take place . . . Hudson's reflection on her process indicates such a strategy.

(Garrett Brown 2007: 158)

3.2 Thematic links

3.2.1 Solo works with the artist as subject

There have been a few occasions that I have made work for groups of people, usually commissioned projects or for students, and a number of times I have experimented with choreographing duets. Mainly though my practice involves making solos, and always with myself as subject as illustrated in this portfolio.

Hetty Blades discusses this when examining *Vis-er-al* (2015) [6]:

The viewer is at times engaged with Hudson directly, through clear shots of her face and body. At other points, her body is abstracted. This movement between literal and abstract renderings combines with the mixed perspectives to generate a self/portrait effect, [this] allows us to more clearly comprehend the multiple forms of (self)representation that take place in the work.

(Blades 2017)

There are practical considerations with working in this way as it is simpler and easier to organise than large group choreographies but the primary rationale has been artistic.

The theme of body as landscape develops through the works in the portfolio, and

clarifies as the research matures over time. This can be increasingly seen in the later film works as I take out all place/site, intentionally in order to foreground the body.

There are obvious readings to be taken from a body of work by a female artist, in which she and her body are subject, and feminist considerations do have a place in my practice and are worth acknowledging. However, for the purposes of this study and as it has not been my foremost research activity, I am choosing not to pursue this discourse here.

3.2.2 Autobiography/ the lived experience

The studio based research practices outlined above means that I make work about my own lived experience. Autobiography, like dance, is situated at the intersection of bodily experience and cultural representation (Cooper Albright, 1997: 119). Traditionally, the term autobiography has connotations of a linear personal narrative (Reeve 2013: 40); my own stories though are non linear in my work and are more about states of being than issues, so being able to be read from whatever place the witness/audience finds themselves. I believe that when told honestly and with authenticity, the artist's autobiography can speak universally. We all understand something of desire, longing, loss, joy, touch, the delicacy of the breath. Cooper Albright illuminates this:

Although it is self-referential, autobiography nonetheless assumes an audience, engaging in a reciprocal dialogue in which a story about my life helps you to think about your own life. How these personal stories are mediated by reciprocal representation, that is how one's (auto) life (bio) is written (graphy), and how the inevitable gap between my experience and yours is bridged, makes for a very interesting geography of discourses.

(Cooper Albright 1997: 119)

In early works I coined the phrase ‘versions of stories’ in relationship to this approach to devising. Writing about this in a journal in 2003 I say:

Versions of stories . . . what we say to another person may not be what they hear. I have my version of what is going on here, and you have yours, and somewhere in the middle there may be a ‘truth’? Witnessing and being witnessed. Seeing and being seen. What are the ways in which I can bring my experiences of being witnessed in a studio by my peers who are familiar with this non-judgemental way of looking into a performance setting?

(Hudson 2003)

This can be seen clearly in the score for the piece *i feel a . . .* (2003) [1] which the journal section above refers to. There are investigations of the aging female body in performance in my work. *Making Lemonade* (2013) [5] The work draws on lived experience, using the image of lemons as analogy for aging, specifically the aging female dancers body and was made when I was forty one, more than twenty years after the start of my dance career. In their text on mature dance practitioners Fergus Early and Jackie Lansley comment on the shift towards longevity for dance makers, saying that the profession ‘has always demanded that dance be constantly replenished with a supply of fresh young bodies, threatening and ousting mature artists’ (Early & Lansley 2011: 12). They acknowledge though that there are differences in contemporary dance practices, stating that ‘by contrast, the modern and post-modern dance of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries has thrown up some striking examples of the older dancer, or in most cases the older dancer-choreographer’ (Early & Lansley 2011: 13).

In later works such as *Vis-er-al* (2015) [6] notions of autobiography become more defined: *Vis-er-al* is a solo work, based on an autobiographical event

(Blades 2017). In some ways though there is an ambiguity to the autobiography due to the nature of the medium (film) and the multiple viewpoints of the work:

The autobiographical nature of the work means it could be interpreted as a straightforward self-portrait, however, the mediation of the camera, and central role of editing, means that a third person perspective is brought to bear on the movement, generating an interplay of perspectives
(Blades 2017)

3.2.3 Kinaesthetic experience

A situation of somatic practices informs my approach to my life, teaching, being and artistry in terms of continual attention to the body-mind interplay. I have been researching through studio based practice, performance and film making, and considering how I can make performance and film works that engage the audience gently, allowing their bodies and senses to respond to the work. An example of this can be seen in *Multiple Body* (2007) [4] when the audience interplays with the piece in order to see it. When we see a body moving, we see movement that is potentially produced by any human body, including our own and through kinaesthetic sympathy we actually reproduce it vicariously in our present muscular experience (Martin cited in Foster 2011: 7).

Physiological inquiries into kinesthesia have been sporadic, but dance pedagogy and criticism have consistently cultivated an understanding and awareness of the importance of kinaesthetic awareness (Foster 2011: 7). Our kinaesthetic sense can be said to be the missing sense along with touch, taste etc., and as dancers and artists who work with somatics we become highly tuned to this sense, to sensation. Anna Halprin⁵⁰ speaks of this:

The kinaesthetic sense has end organs and nerve endings in our muscles, tendons, ligaments, bones and joints that make it possible for us to have awareness of our movements. Nerve endings in the inner ear allow for us

to know our bodily placement in space. All of these are part of our proprioceptive nervous systems.

(Halprin 1995: 31)

I make work that plays with how that can be transmitted to the audience so that they too can engage with this, which Natalie Garrett Brown illuminates:

In relying less on the visual often more than one sense is brought into play. The same process is identifiable within the dancer–performance space relationship within somatic-informed dance. For example a way of being in and connecting with space without sole reliance on the visual sense is identifiable in the work of Hudson.

(Garrett Brown 2007: 144)

The research has developed over many years from early trials in performance, as described above, through to playing with techniques in subsequent film works as outlined in Chapter One⁵¹. Much of this interrelationship between an audience and performers kinaesthetic experience relates directly to my experiences of receiving and teaching of SRT, and of the power of imagery. As Skinner herself says, ‘the language of images is vast if not vaster than the language of words. Plus, the image has a great capacity to communicate such nonverbal information as kinaesthetic data’ (Skinner cited in Neuhaus 2010). When I am teaching, I sometimes say to students: ‘Yes, if you can feel it, imagine it, I can see it’. The same can be said to be true in performance for an audience witnessing a performer deeply engaged in image and in a kinaesthetic state.

3.2.4 Visual art and iconic images

A further synthesis between the works can be seen in the recurring theme of representations from, and references to images⁵² from visual art and iconic cultural images. Whilst self-portraits in the visual art tradition might also work with abstraction, the temporality of [dance] film means that it is possible to

fluctuate between abstract and direct representations, blending representational views (Blades 2017). Perhaps this referencing of artworks, particularly paintings, can be traced back to my early years, to the impact of artist parents and frequent visits to galleries. Examples of these influences on my practice can be seen in many of my works, and include *Girl Holding Lemons* (Bourgureau 1899) and *Opheila* (Millais 1852).

Some materials have been removed from this thesis due to Third Party Copyright. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.



Figure 10. *Girl Holding Lemons* (Bouguereau, W.A. 1899) and *Making Lemonade* (Hudson, P. 2013)

Some materials have been removed from this thesis due to Third Party Copyright. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.



Figure 11. *Ophelia* (Millais, J.E. 1851-52) and *Vis-er-al* (Hudson, P. 2015)

Visual art and painterly considerations also can be seen to impact the way in which many of my works are shown. Gallery spaces are often chosen for shows, and in *Making Lemonade* (2013) [5] the work is literally framed. The three screens for this installation piece are hung on gallery walls, and picture frames

made to surround them meaning that the images then take on the look of paintings.

Some materials have been removed from this thesis due to Third Party Copyright. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.

Figure 12. Installation of *Making Lemonade* (Hudson P. 2013) Vivid Projects, Birmingham, 2015

This is further amplified by the fact that one of the screens is a moving still life, a bowl of fruit, directly referencing *Still life with lemon, oranges, and a pomegranate* (Hulsdouck, c1620-1640).

Some materials have been removed from this thesis due to Third Party Copyright. The unabridged version of the thesis can be viewed at the Lanchester Library, Coventry University.



Figure 13. *Still life with lemon, oranges, and a pomegranate* (Van Hulsdouck, J. c1620-1640) and *Making Lemonade* (Hudson, P. 2013)

Iconic cultural images also appear in the works: butterflies in *Tread softly because you tread on my dreams* (2005) [2], roses in *Let me count the ways* (2005) [3], high heeled (strippers) shoes in *Multiple Body* (2007) [4], lemons in *Making Lemonade* (2013) [5], and water in *Vis-er-al* (2015) [6].

The important underpinnings of my approach have been illuminated, both in terms of studio practices, and thematic through lines in the works. Many of these are common to other dance artists working in the field, but it is useful to reflect on how they impact my practice and on the works in the portfolio as it developed over time. It is also clear to see how deeply influential SRT has been on my approach, and on the choreographic choices made.

4. Foundations and new propositions: methodologies, models and theories.

In order to reflect appropriately on my development as a research practitioner it is important to critically consider the research methodologies, models and theories used to develop this portfolio, and the wider body of work within which it resides.

The research lies within the broad field of phenomenology, and within that leans towards ontological philosophies of lived experience. It is clear however that within the layers of enquiry the principles and the practice of SRT are the constant underpinning approach and method. This then will be foregrounded, presented as new methodology, and as affording unique insights and contribution to knowledge in the field of dance and approaches to choreographic practice.

4.1 Phenomenological Lived Experience

Phenomenology can be characterised in a broad sense as the unprejudiced, descriptive study of whatever appears to consciousness, a way of seeing, rather than a set of doctrines (Moran 2002: 1). Phenomenological research methods therefore are qualitative rather than quantitative. Qualitative methods that examine and interpret dance from an aesthetic point of view can be said to be consistent with the nature of dance itself, providing a rich approach for study (Fraleigh 1999: 17). Furthermore, phenomenological approaches are not limited to academic writing; Susan Kozel agrees and argues that phenomenology is a creative and a critical methodology, a way to create content as well as a way to reflect upon it in critical or academic modes (Kozel 2013).

Within the field of phenomenology, my research leans towards notions of embodied perception and the lived experience. As dance is an embodied art, the body is the lived (experiential) ground of the dance aesthetic (Fraleigh 1987: xiii), and as an embodied expressive form of communication dance therefore engenders a sense of bodily appearance where vulnerabilities can be shared and transgressed (Williams & Bendelow 1998: 196).

Somatic inquiry was buoyed by the growth of existentialism and phenomenology as well as through dance and expressionism (Eddy 2009). In somatic dance practices we see a rejection of body/mind dualism and an embracing of notions of the osmosis and connection between the two. This is in alignment with Merleau-Ponty's phenomenology of perception and embodiment. Merleau-Ponty argued that our contact with external reality is always mediated by our senses. In a phenomenological approach, the mind is not detached from the body's senses, and the body in its act of perceiving is what constitutes being (de Guevara 2011: 25).

In phenomenology, perception is regarded as the primary source of knowledge, the source that cannot be doubted and therefore intentions united with sensations make up the full concrete act of perception (Moustakas 1994: 52). The contemporary philosopher Alva Noë speaks of this, saying that 'perception is not something that happens to us, or in us. It is something we do . . . the world makes itself available to the perceiver through physical movement and interaction' (Noë 2004: 1). In dance, as we extend this principle of perception, phenomenological approaches are an excellent companion to unpacking and understanding the practice.

4.2 Phenomenology and Skinner Releasing Technique

In SRT we are unravelling layers of holding and letting go of preconceptions of who we are in our dancing bodies and in our very selves, approaching the practice then as a 'phenomenal presence is to presuppose nothing in advance of the immediate experience of the dance' (Sheets-Johnstone 1979: 8). It can be argued that phenomenology is entwined all the way through the pedagogy of SRT. This appears to have been unintentional, but in unpacking the form, it is clear to see. The notion of perception is implicit throughout the pedagogy, but is also expressed explicitly at times. For example, in class six, working with the underlying principle of 'essences- listening to the physical self: practise listening to the physical self' (Skinner 2010), an instruction during a check list is that 'we learn to allow our perceptions to guide us' (Skinner 2011: class 6), so cultivating an understanding of how our perceptions can be useful and tangible, and can allow us a deepened embodiment.

Rebecca Skelton illuminates this in her paper on SRT, describing the interaction of mind and body, and foregrounding phenomenology, specifically Merleau-Ponty's approach as being of note:

The psycho physical experience is that experience that exists as a result of the interplay between the mind and the imagination engaged with the body in space. The psychophysical experience of space for the dancer and dancer as choreographer is that relationship between the inside body/mind space and the space the other side of the skin, outside space.

Merleau-Ponty (1962) sees this relationship between the two orders, subject/object, outside/inside, psycho/physical as reciprocal whereby one not only affects the other, but where there is a blurring of boundaries between the two. He perceives space and depth both behind the skin as well as beyond it and defines a non-dualistic relationship of intertwining.

(Skelton 2002)

Working with process as a central element in devising and creating dances means that outcomes performances and artefacts become driven not by end gain,

but by an unknowing unfolding during the creative act. Notions of process are fundamental in SRT, as Robert Davidson explains:

The process requires great patience and persistence. One learns, often with difficulty, to simply become available, to expect nothing, to be listening to nature at all times, to become aware, in short: to witness the process happening. Simultaneously, we are immersed in, absorbed by, and involved with the experience of process.

(Davidson 1979)

The body of the research will then transmit experiences of presence and the presence differently from that of the spectatorial or spectated body (Parker-Starbuck & Mock 2011: 229).

In SRT we foster increasing perceptions of innate body knowing and knowledge.

Streets-Johnstone asserts that

Consciousness-body knows itself to be spatially present in-the-midst-of the-world, not through a factual kinaesthetic perception of its parts, but through a pre reflective awareness of itself as a spatially present totality.

(Streets-Johnstone 1979: 22)

This statement relates directly to the practice in SRT of fostering multi-directional awareness's and an awareness of the whole self.

4.3 Skinner Releasing Technique as methodology

A mode of enquiry and a research methodology are inextricably linked. The mode of enquiry, in this instance phenomenological approaches, is a way of thinking about dance and asking questions; the methodology is a way of seeking answers to these questions (Hanstein 1999: 45). In my practice as it is an evolving and intrinsic approach, sitting within practice as research, the term methodology does present some challenges. Creative approaches to research practices offer an implicit challenge to outmoded perceptions as the term methodology can imply an attempt to capture, codify and categorise knowledge

(Kershaw and Nicholson 2001: 1). We see then that there can be a tension between practice as research and traditional research methodologies, but solutions are possible:

Practitioner/researchers need to take the terms and the technique of their practice and repurpose them into language and methods of research. For example, many artists use journals and sketch books to develop their work. Such a specific method can be repurposed to serve as a research method . . . Inevitably this represents something of a quantum shift in the creative researchers thinking. Now the art making and the artwork itself are no longer thought to be existing solely within their disciplinary field. They become instead part of a research process.

(Heseman & Mafe 2009: 215)

Some commentators note that SRT holds the potential for encouraging creative practice and performance qualities. It is interesting to observe however that although there is some literature that alludes to these possibilities by, for example, Alexander (1999), Emslie (2009), and Skelton (2002), there is little expansion on this in terms of how it can be specifically actioned in a choreographic process. In the accompanying portfolio of evidence I unpick this in detail in relationship to my performance and screen dance research, and offer tangible solutions for navigating into making dance works using SRT as an approach.

There are a number of key elements to the methodology that have been utilised for making these works and undertaking the research, which are a combination of the underpinning ethos of SRT, its underlying principles, and practical tasks from the pedagogy. Together these make up an approach or methodology that I have been developing in my practice over a sustained period of time and examples of it are interwoven through the body of this text. I am also developing models of practice and ways into choreographic devising that draw on these principles⁵³.

4.4 Techniques from visual art practices

For *Multiple Body* (2007) [4] in order to view the piece the audience have to move to see the installation, an unusual activity for a dance audience, but a familiar one in art galleries. Consequently the viewer is replicating some of the movement material that they watch on screen in order to fully observe the work. This device was not made explicit to the audience, but becomes an implicit experience when a person interacts in the simplest and most natural of ways. 'In dance, while the material body is central to the form, the relational self might also manifest, even in solo works, through the context of its transmission' (Blades 2017). It is therefore continuing the research around kinaesthetic engagement of the audience seen in earlier works, and extends the use of SRT principles and practice. It plays with the notion that an audience can (literally) be moved by a work, thus engaging them in some of the movement principles and material in the piece: the 'unified whole of the torso' (Skinner 2011: class 3) as seen in SRT classes. For example: an audience member will be engaging with this action as they turn from viewing one screen to another. This is a device seen in the work of other visual artists, including Bill Viola; most of Viola's videos and installations are about the relationship between the artistic act and the viewer standing in or before the work (Morgan 2004: 98). The issue of the body, the one seen and the one doing the seeing is vital (Townsend 2004: 15).

Multiple Body (2007) [4] continues to examine getting close in to the body with the camera. As the work is concerned with the body as site the piece was filmed and lit in such a way that it is only the form of the dancer that is seen, rather than any background⁵⁴. The metaphorical use of body imagery in relation to landscape is fundamental in the Western world. The renaissance metaphor that

understood the world to be modelled on the human body has generally been regarded as a one-way relation 'landscape as body'. In imaginative literature, at least, the reverse relation, 'body as landscape' is of frequent occurrence. (Porteus 1986).

Multiple Body (2007) [4], and much of my work, is illuminating the body as landscape rather than the body in landscape, a theme that developed through the works in the portfolio, and a practice that I have continued to employ in all of my subsequent and intervening works. It is an approach that is familiar in the visual art world, but less so in dance.

Many of the works drew direct inspiration from depictions in visual art. This includes a number of the images in *Making Lemonade* (2013) [5], and some in *Multiple Body* (2007) [4] and *Vis-er-al* (2015) [6], examples of which can be seen in the previous Chapter. Currently we often associate lemons with bitterness, or with sourness. This was not always the case as the art historian Peter de Rynck illustrates:

Lemons are a seemingly ubiquitous feature of still life's. The fruit was ascribed medicinal qualities in the 17th Century; lemons were said to be an antidote to the poisons lurking in a variety of places, not least the gold and silver of expensive serving dishes.

(Rynck 2004: 334)

To deepen the images even further the three screens showing the work are placed inside picture frames, presented like paintings, and one of the screens is a still life shot on time lapse over a six week period when a bowl of fruit decays apart from the lemon which remains fresh, as described previously. This use of multiple screens for showing of the works is a theme for many of the works in my portfolio, and akin to practices found in video and visual art.

Fairly unusually for a contemporary dance choreographer I make solo works

with myself as subject. This aligns more with visual performance practices and with live art, in which the artist uses (her)self as subject. Twentieth century art has increasingly seen the artist's body used as both the subject and object of artist's work, expanding and renewing the age-old tradition of self-portraiture, breaking down the barriers between art and life, visual and sensual experience (Warr & Jones 2003: 1). Blades speaks of this when examining my work and that of Burrows, Fargion and Glendenning:

Examining *52 Portraits* and *Vis-er-al* in relation to the visual art convention of the self-portrait shows how contemporary (screen)dance practices cultivate ambivalent forms of (self) representation through the blending of multiple authorial and mediatized perspectives, resulting in self/portrait effects

(Blades 2017)

4.5 Challenges and limitations

In early encounters with SRT students often refer to the work as Skinner Release. It is important to differentiate between the terminologies of Release and Releasing, to acknowledge the possible limitations of these terms and of SRT, and to open some discussion about what could be seen as protectionism around the form.

4.5.1 Release and Releasing

It is common for many contemporary dance classes to state that they are release-based. This language can be problematic as the information presented often does not have a basis in Releasing, but rather is an appropriation of terminology that is not always grounded by the substance of the movement material offered. Language then can become difficult when a term becomes embedded in popular culture. It is worth noting though that there are teachers who do offer release-

based contemporary dance classes, who have studied Releasing, and have integrated it in their wider practice.

Definitions of Release are complicated and the cause of much discussion. Movement Research Journal devoted two issues to the term in 1999 as the response to calls for submissions was so high. In it Miguel Gutierrez says 'Release: the way that everyone dances now but that no one can define' (Gutierrez 1999: 4). This is an amusing statement, but somewhat underpinned by accuracy.

Releasing assumes a position that tension masks sensation, and that sensation is the language of the body. Mary O'Donnell Fulkerson⁵⁵ states that, for her:

Implicit in the topic of Release are: alignment, concentration, focus, total involvement, investigation of your own thought process, simplicity in approaching life's challenges, and active integration of mind and body.

(O'Donnell Fulkerson
<http://www.releasedance.com/ReleaseDance/HOME.html>)

Fulkerson teaches Release technique, and many of the underpinnings are common with the teachings of SRT as we can see from O'Donnell Fulkerson's description above. Often techniques that have been developed at similar times display common attributes, in reaction to what has come before, and as a consequence of the social, political and artistic situations that they are borne out of.

We can see then that in Fulkerson's highly developed practice that Release is an appropriate term to use. There are key differences between Fulkerson's approach and that in SRT, mainly the use of anatomical information, which is present in Fulkerson's practice, but absent in SRT. There are considerable similarities and parallels though, as illuminated by Lepkoff when he ponders on image in Fulkerson's work, saying: 'The practical subtleties of imagining an

action and not doing it, of allowing an image to move you rather than moving yourself, were both physically and conceptually challenging' (Lepkoff 1999).

It seems that language can become complicated and perhaps the distinction of the terms of Release and Releasing in these instances are simply pedantic. Although insistent on calling her technique 'Releasing' as opposed to 'Release' Skinner is credited as one of the originators of Release technique dance education (Buckwater in Dean & Nathanielsz 2017: 181). The importance of the 'ing', the gerund, is highlighted previously in Chapter one.

Further illuminating the differentiation between the terms Release and Releasing is that SRT is distinguished from 'release-based' work by its organisation into a formalised teaching pedagogy, and by its highly specific use of poetic imagery. Agis & Moran (2010) note that even the term 'releasing' can be misleading as it is often thought to imply a dance aesthetic that is relaxed or exclusively fluid, whereas Releasing is in fact concerned with liberating or releasing power and strength. Kirsty Alexander echoes this when she says that 'SRT does not mean an aimless free for all despite the freedom of the individual to explore at their own pace' (Alexander 1999: 10).

4.5.2 A pertinent pedagogy

Many elements of SRT feel incredibly contemporary, particularly in light of current interest in mindfulness practices. Danna Faulds'⁵⁶ poem below contains a similar sensation to that experienced in an SRT class:

It only takes a reminder to breathe,
a moment to be still, and just like that,
something in me settles, softens, makes space for imperfection.
The harsh voice of judgment drops to a whisper and I remember again
that life isn't a relay race; that we will all cross the finish line; that waking

up to life is what we were born for.
As many times as I forget, catch myself charging forward without even
know where I'm going, that many times I can make the choice to stop, to
breathe, and be, and walk slowly into the mystery.

(Faulds, D 2002)

Despite the enthusiasm for SRT, no one technique is perfect, and it could be argued that there are some omissions in the technique, or elements that may seem somewhat dated. Gaby Agis disagrees and says that 'as a pedagogy it is pretty faultless' (Agis 2017). She is correct in this as the pedagogy has evolved over time, and has been continually refined and updated with considerable care to its logical progression and intention. SRT does do what it sets out to for those that choose to engage with it. It may indeed be that some people do not connect to the technique, nor find it useful, but that is not necessarily a fault of the technique, nor of the participant, rather that it is not a good fit between the two. In relation to the lack of anatomical images in the work, Agis argues that although some people may perceive the lack of anatomical instructions as difficult to relate to, the poetic images DO work anatomically, and the whole technique is underpinned by anatomical clarity, explained through poetic terms (Agis 2017). Kirsty Alexander describes this relationship between image and anatomy:

Skinner's images do not describe anatomical facts . . . Even when training new teachers of her pedagogy; Skinner does not dissect the images to offer an anatomical explanation of 'how they work'. A scientific reduction is irrelevant (and was never part of Skinner's route to discovery), what is important is that the teacher embodies the image, not that she can give a scientific explanation for it.

(Alexander 2015: 88)

It can be claimed that somatic techniques and approaches are somewhat normative and modernist, and that the cultural body is often absent. In his expansive and liberal text that examines what he terms the 'conceit of the

natural body' in somatics, Doran George (1969-2017) talks of this about somatic approaches generally:

With romanticised and idealised visions of other cultures, species, and stages in human development, cultures that were represented as Eastern or primitive, along with children and animals served as an undifferentiated counterpoint to Western ideologies and morals. Somatics also erased its historical and cultural specificity through recourse to scientific rhetoric, which was presented as proof of the mystical insights drawn from Eastern traditions, and the basic principles found in atavistic corporeality. The body therefore constructed itself as an invisible category of nature that nevertheless perpetrated privileging and exclusion, even while it claimed to be universal.

(George 2014: 160)

For example, although the lack of hierarchy in the movement material and approach in the pedagogy of SRT is inclusive for disabled dancers, the language of the technique often presumes that someone stands, and moves through space on their legs. Given the poetic tone of the language, and that its rhythm and cadence is so important it is sometimes difficult to adjust to more inclusive language (Alexander 2017). The first part of class one is 'Let's begin on our feet' (Skinner 2011) and it can be quite cumbersome to translate. However, an experienced teacher can achieve this, it just requires some thought and skill. There are even teachers such as Rosemary Spencer⁵⁷ who are translating the work into sign language, so we can see that efforts are being made to ensure accessibility of the pedagogy.

Any art is of course a product of the time in which it is created: politically, culturally and artistically. If we begin to understand Skinner's pedagogy through the lens of a break from or reaction to modernism, or as Lepecki states, a 'rupture with the past' (Lepecki: 2004: 170), then context becomes clearer. George illuminates this when discussing the beginnings of somatic dance techniques:

Through these regimens, physical sensation gained new significance as dancers reconstructed the body through involving themselves with its supposed unpredictable and emotional nature, rather than retaining the modest distance of scientific observation in which the previous generation had engaged.

(George 2014: 129)

As the development of SRT coincided with a time when notions of Eastern philosophy were emerging in the West then 'we can understand more fully why she characterised the West as castigating and attempting to control or contain nature, thereby impeding the potential for cosmic unity' (George 2014: 158). Some critics argue that SRT is too cosmic, but supporters talk of notions of the dance moving them and dancers often affirm they are doing emotional and spiritual work, guaranteeing the profundity of SRT (George 2014: 159).

4.5.3 Perceptions of protectionism

There have been occasional claims of protectionism around SRT, but these are unfounded, and are I feel, a misunderstanding. Other contemporary dance techniques do not require a teacher to be certified to teach it, modern dance techniques such as Graham and Cunningham in particular do not require teacher certification. Nor do post modern techniques such as Contact Improvisation for which there is no formal or codified pedagogy, meaning that the success of teachers relies on reputation alone (Adkins: 1995: 3).

SRT therefore is more akin to somatic practices like BMC, Feldenkrais and Alexander Technique which all have certification attached. SRT teacher training is rigorous therefore ensuring that the form has a continuity and depth of understanding from practitioners that is true to the origins of the work.

Perhaps the perceptions of protectionism have arisen in part because teachers are not permitted to share the scripts with students. The rationale behind this makes sense: it is to ensure that uncertified people do not teach the work so guaranteeing the quality of the teaching and of the images and material shared. It also relates to the difference between Release and Releasing explored above.

Written material about SRT is relatively scarce, so a perception of protectionism may possibly have arisen from that. Recently however there have been more explorations about the work in written form⁵⁸ and consequently more unveiling of the work to students and the wider public. Sally Dean and Julie Nathanielsz⁵⁹ 2017 journal article is fundamental in this shift as it directly references images from the pedagogy of SRT numerous times, something that has rarely been seen previously.

The pedagogy of SRT and the scripts transcribed by Theresa Moriaty⁶⁰ in the early 1990's at Skinner's request ensure that the purity of the form survives. Alongside this there are teachers such as Stephanie Skura⁶¹ who have developed their own practice from SRT, which Skura calls 'Open Source Forms'. Dean and Nathanielsz ponder what the legacy of Skinner's work may be, and say:

Those influenced by Skinner's work will embody and create their own enquiries based on their needs and orientations. If we can begin to find a dialogue and ways to clarify our own experiences and preferences, we hope this can open up an ability to invite multi-directionality to the legacy itself.

(Dean & Nathanielsz, 2017: 193)

4.5.4 Other practices

SRT has been the underpinning of my movement practice for over twenty years, and as Agis states above, as a dance technique and pedagogy it is complete. SRT

is self-contained and offers all of the things that any other contemporary dance technique does: alignment, strength, precision, dexterity and flexibility. In addition it nurtures creativity in a way that other dance techniques do not. Natalie Garrett agrees and says that ‘a dance training informed by somatic practices can be seen to erase the dualistic separation of physical skill and creativity observable within conventional modes of dance training’ (Garrett: 2006: 11).

However, I have engaged deeply in other forms; similarly to Joan Skinner I studied ballet, Graham, and Cunningham techniques prior to coming to somatic based work, and it appears that this trajectory is quite common in SRT teachers. Before discovering SRT I was actively engaged in Contact Improvisation, and in other Release techniques. Later I studied BMC in depth, and practiced Authentic Movement. This desire for other input in my movement vocabulary does not strike me as being because of any limitations within SRT, but rather, that these practices support me alongside it. George (2014: 129) notes that many dancers [in 1970’s New York] felt that Skinner Releasing and Authentic Movement dovetailed their needs. I concur and notice that the two work well alongside each other, as well as BMC, which George also notes acts in compliment to SRT:

Much like other Somatic approaches, dancers cultivated ease in BMC classes. But in metaphors for sensation and movement similar to Skinner Releasing and Authentic Movement, they felt that the organs and other body systems released energy that pulsed with its own vibration, fueling idiosyncratic vocabulary and rejuvenating exploratory procedures. Like Skinner’s concept of releasing, BMC invested the body with natural flux, promising unforeseen dancing rather than the reproduction of established styles.

(George: 2014: 152)

It is pertinent at this point to mention yoga. Yoga has been an important underpinning movement practice for most of my life and there are parallels

between elements of yoga and SRT. For example in SRT we are cultivating effortless effort (Skinner 2011), as illuminated in Chapter One. This is a principle also seen in yoga, as described by Patanjali⁶² in his yoga sutras: 'Perfection in yoga is achieved when the effort to perform it becomes effortless and the infinite being within is reached' (Patanjali translated by Iyanegar 2002: Sutra 2.4). The notion of an infinite being within could be said to be a similar state to that of the dance dancing us in SRT.

Phenomenological approaches appear then to be a good fit with the philosophies and practice of SRT, and propositions for new methodologies have been offered. The influences from visual art practices have been explored, and whilst SRT has informed my practice hugely, there have been other movement influences that have worked alongside SRT. We can see that an understanding of the time in which the work was developed can give us empathy to any perceived limitations within it. Skinner insisted that optimum functioning depends upon achieving harmony with subconscious cosmic rhythms (George 2014: 155); and we can rest assured that teachers of the work have no resistance to it's evolving nature, to disseminating information about the work and to unveiling the mysteries of it to students, whilst still retaining the practice in its purest form.

5. Creating art and developing paradigm shifts

It is important to highlight the contribution of the portfolio of evidence to the field. There are a number of key themes running through the works and which link them; these are both thematic and methodological, and are outlined more fully in Chapter Three. They are working practices that many artists use but together, along with SRT as an underpinning methodology, they make the research and the body of work original; specifically as I foreground SRT as a lived experience and in relationship to phenomenology as a methodology, as outlined in Chapter Four. For the purposes of this evaluation, I will illuminate how the works individually, and as a body of practice, are original and are significant.

5.1 Contribution to knowledge

The portfolio of works can be said to ‘add progressively to understanding of an issue, part of a field of a complex problem (e.g. multidisciplinary one), social or natural phenomenon or professional practice by a series of linked in-depth studies or experiments’ (PhD by Portfolio Guide 2013). It is claimed that the body of work contained in the portfolio of evidence and the thesis make a significant and original contribution to knowledge in the following ways:

5.1.1 The creation of novel artefacts

The works individually and as a body of work make an original contribution to knowledge as they ‘create novel artefacts in any medium (e.g. photography, painting, textile, sculpture)’ (PhD by Portfolio Guide 2013). They are original by the simple fact that they are devised new dance works that have come through

me, from my choreographic practice, and thus are novel artefacts. They contribute to the case for the validity of practice as research knowing on the basis not only of the rigour of the methods, but also by the originality of invention (Nelson 2013: 41).

5.1.2 Dance technique into creative methodology

Layered inside this artistic practice is research that contributes to expanding knowledge in the field of approaches to choreographic practice, specifically the development of acknowledging SRT as a resource for the creative process. This is seen as a through line in the portfolio, gradually increasing in clarity within the works and the research. The portfolio therefore examines SRT as a methodological approach and ‘answers new research questions in professional practice, including the synthesis of artefact/s with a research-informed and analytical narrative’ (PhD by Portfolio Guide 2013).

The work contained within the portfolio of evidence shifts the paradigm of SRT from a dance technique into a tangible form for sourcing creativity in the arena of dance making, evidencing this through my practice. Therefore SRT is foregrounded as a methodology and so it contributes to expanding knowledge in post-modern dance practices. In this way it can be said to ‘extend model or paradigm development from one field to another and show how its use refines, deepens or changes understanding of the target field’ (PhD by Portfolio Guide 2013). This is explored more fully below in 5.2 as a shifting and developing paradigm.

5.1.3 The intersection of dance and visual art

Although my history and training is in dance, and I identify as a dance artist, my work often sits well in a visual art context. There is a discussion of this in Chapter Four. Of note is the support offered by curators of visual and media art such as Yasmeen Baig Clifford from Vivid Projects who has commissioned several pieces of my work. Works have been shown in dance settings, but also and notably, in many galleries and media arts settings internationally (see Appendix 3). Blades concurs:

In the case of Hudson's work, the relational self is generated through the context within which it is shown. The work is screened at festivals dedicated to screendance as well as at video art festivals and events. Being shared in these venues contextualizes Hudson's work as constructed in relation to other artists, emphasizing the place of the work within particular areas of practice.

(Blades: 2017)

The work transcends barriers between visual art and dance drawing on traditions from both, particularly in the transference of dance practices such as improvisational techniques to the devising and editing of screendance. In this way it is responding to 'extending model or paradigm development for one field to another and show how its use refines, deepens or changes understanding of the target field' (PhD by Portfolio Guide 2013).

5.2 Shifting and developing paradigms

Through this practice and research I propose that SRT is a dance technique that has further reaching possibilities: that of a creative tool, and as a methodology for making dances. Rebecca Skelton touches on this telling us:

It is becoming clearer how theory and practice are made visible through each other. This notion reflects what has been suggested for the creative (dance) education experience, technique and creativity fusing. It can be

non dualistic, a process of coming and going, a state of flux and change, where even in stillness there is motion, flow.

(Skelton 2002)

Nelson states that 'insights in practice as research may be in the development of a technique' (Nelson 2013: 41). In my extending of this dance technique into a creative practice for a (dance) artist, I 'develop a new model, paradigm or conceptual framework and test it in application' (PhD by Portfolio Guide 2013). This is supported by the fact that although there are some references to the use of SRT in creativity by other scholars, evidence of this in practice-based research is scant. SRT teacher Manny Emslie talks about this:

Not only is SRT unusual in that the technical and creative are fused as one but its pedagogy also provides a means by which performance artistry is nurtured. It is rare that the artistry of performance is integrated into a traditional dance technique class. It is well known that improving technical skills does not inherently develop personal artistry.

(Emslie 2009)

SRT as dance technique has been said to have creative possibilities as Emslie has stated above, and within this portfolio of evidence I illuminate this, so shifting the paradigm of SRT as a dance technique clearly into that of one as a creative resource. SRT differs from other dance techniques, as illustrated previously, in that it fuses improvisational approaches, image and alignment without the use of set steps. It could be said to have more in common with somatic approaches, a somatic learning environment often begins by quieting the mind-body chatter in order to focus attention on the body's sensory stimuli (Batson 2007). If we examine Batson's definition of somatics, SRT clearly looks like it:

The general tenor of the somatic learning environment is one of personal exploration, self-acceptance and non-competitiveness. Instead of striving to perform the movement, the dancer learns to move from an embodied source – fully receptive and responsive to the moment of movement. Such training is designed to free the dancer from rigid holding patterns or other constraints that bind thought, feeling, and action.

(Batson 2007: 70)

Advocates are clear that although it engages with body/mind practices, SRT is primarily a dance technique, and its referencing as a somatic practice is a fairly recent phenomena.

5.3 Citations

It could be argued that in the case of performance or artefacts, such as this portfolio of evidence and body of work, that citations are not only when others write about the work in reviews or academic journals, but that the frequency, and level at which the showing of the works is seen, can also be called citation. Acceptance at conferences, performance or gallery events, and invitations to commission or make new work based on previous outputs is therefore important, and further evidence of the esteem of peers and within the field.

As the work contained in the portfolio of evidence is practice, it is claimed that citation frequency of the works is primarily evidenced through the invitation to, or acceptance in, public exhibition, the receipt of public funding and of awards for excellence.

As the research developed, critical acclaim increased and the works were accepted to significant video, dance and screendance festivals internationally. There are numerous examples of this, and the works have been shown in a variety of settings. These, along with partners and funding bodies involved are outlined in Appendix 3, as are prizes and awards granted. These are further presented as evidence of the esteem that the work is held in by my peers and by leading arts organisations. It is important to note that my practice has received numerous Arts Council England funding awards, and it is significant that these

were often research and development grants, so demonstrating that the investigative and research element of the practice was deemed to be of prominence.

Even though there are relatively few citations in journals of the outputs in the portfolio of evidence, this does not diminish the body of work as being of significance, or of importance in its field as outlined above. Those academic citations that do exist are highlighted here and in previous chapters and are from two main sources: Natalie Garrett Brown's PhD (2007) which looked at my practice in detail in relationship to that of others, and Hetty Blade's article (2017) for the International Journal of Screendance which reflects on my work and that of Burrows, Fargion and Glendenning⁶³. My research and practice is also cited⁶⁴ in unpublished sources such as students' dissertations and post-graduate theses, showing that it is held in esteem in opening areas of research. As well as the importance of the frequency of the showing of work in international settings, the particular situations in which the works were performed or exhibited is presented here as evidence of its contribution to knowledge and the esteem it is held in by my peers and others in my field⁶⁵.

5.4 The field

When considering the originality of the body of work it is also important to place it within the field of practice and research in which it resides, and to consider the work of my contemporaries. Natalie Garrett Brown speaks to this in her writing on the subject, placing my practice amongst key choreographers of the post post-modern dance period:

Tufnell, Agis, Hudson and Moran each acknowledge how this [sourcing

images from the body to develop scored improvisation] affects the duration and nature of the choreographic process. Each of these artists can be seen to redefine it as a collaborative process concerned with exploration of unknown territory rather than the communication of a predetermined idea.

(Garrett Brown 2007: 158)

There is not yet a name for this new movement in dance that is beyond post-modernism. 'This movement has been gaining shape, visibility and force since the mid-1990s but it is by no means an organised one, nor does it have a proper name' (Lepecki 2006: 45). Several commentators are calling it conceptual dance, and although some choreographers reject this terminology, it does at least allow for historically locating this movement within twentieth-century performance and visual arts (Lepecki 2006: 45). Other discussions are calling this emerging period in dance Post-dance:

Post-dance is when dance and choreography reclaim, and successfully, their autonomy and in a totally new way. Post-dance, therefore, offers dance to detach from being about something, having application—thus functioning as a vehicle for some other discourse or attitude—and instead allows dance to produce politics on its own terms, through its own discursive apparatus. Post-dance is when dance in itself becomes political.

(Spangberg 2016)

Hetty Blades, in her article for the International Journal of Screendance examines my work in detail in relationship to *52 Portraits* (Burrows, Fargion & Glendenning 2017), so placing it at the forefront of new practices in contemporary dance. She writes: '*52 Portraits* and *Vis-er-al* demonstrate how (screen)dance provides fertile ground for rendering the relational self' (Blades 2017). She goes on to state the importance of my work within the field generally:

The broader framework of the series [Hudson's work] further demonstrates the multiple perspectives that contribute to the work's contextualisation, and its positioning in relation to historical and current practices.

(Blades 2017)

Although I am one of a handful of artists globally who is utilising the principles and practice of SRT as a way into choreographing, some of my contemporaries who are also teachers of the form also acknowledge its influence⁶⁶. Other artists have been working with the underlying principles and techniques of SRT in their practice include Ruth Gibson⁶⁷ who developed an app with Bruno Martelli as 'Igloo' that utilised motion capture to track SRT teachers, including myself, in movement. She says of the project:

It aims to generate new visualisations based on the capture of SRT that emphasise stillness, interiority and close contact with the floor; to encourage critical engagement with this practice: to expand the possibilities of motion capture technology (hardware and software) and to enhance audience kinaesthetic engagement within interactive virtual performance environments.

(Gibson 2011)

Florence Peake talks about how SRT is present in her practice. She notes that she does not work with it directly anymore but that it has influenced her sensitivity to images and a subjective experience of images; how a dancer embodies ideas and how we put an atmosphere or intentions into a space/performance (Peake 2017). This relates to how I have a sensation of the practice of SRT underpinning my making, but I have chosen to be more explicit in my use of some of the specific material from the pedagogy at times. I have also allowed images beyond those from SRT to develop, which Peake demonstrates also:

The classes with the more primal images have connected me to certain ideas and images that I have explored in my own imagination and have since led to works that I am still exploring today.

(Peake 2017)

Gaby Agis reflects on SRT and choreographic processes in a conversation with Joan Skinner, particularly noting how SRT can open up dancers to creative possibilities:

The way the work contributes to my choreography is vast. There is a space within the process that enriches the creative side of your being. It's not that you go directly back into the studio and recreate it, but somehow it does really allow people that space. This work not only gives a technique to dance from and use, but it also opens dancers up to the possibilities of creativity.

(Agis in Hobson: 1997)

It appears that the training in holding a process that SRT teachers receive means that there is a deep understanding of the responsibility of that, and of how that can then be transferred into the care needed to tend the act of choreography.

Florence Peake echoes this:

I use SRT to inform the preparations and approach to holding and facilitating working with dancers. I suppose there is a culture and an ethical approach that SRT has given me - it's given me resources to support the dancers that I work with.

(Peake 2017)

This ethical approach confirms ideas around process and availability that were explored in Chapter One. Furthermore, the pedagogy of SRT is poetic, and single ideas and concepts are explored in multiple ways and from many angles, which means that the point by which we enter a (choreographic) idea is non-linear. Joe Moran⁶⁸ attests to this when talking about his work *Arrangement* (Moran 2014) and says that although it brought a lot of research together, it dealt with one or two key ideas (Moran 2017). Gaby Agis discusses this in relationship to her choreographic process and acknowledges that it takes time:

I allow and give time for the work to unfold in it's own way. Its form arises in a non-linear way and I am fully open to the ways in which it might find its structure. I have to be very patient with this process.

(Agis 2017)

She goes on to talk about a specific work *Explicit Faith* (Agis 2005), a piece that I had a small role in, and explores further the fact that working in this way requires considerable time, which I examine in relationship to my own practice

in Chapter One. She also illuminates notions of unfolding, and of the relationship between inner and outer landscapes and experiences, both key elements in SRT:

Explicit Faith was made over a period of 3 years and I feel its unfolding structure had lots of influence from the nature of unfolding in an SRT class, or the way an image unfolds whilst dancing. I allowed the work to unfold with all those involved, so the process of making was of a whole but with different singular voices. The work was then very much sited in an environment that was supportive for it's unfolding in performance. The relationship between inner and outer worlds [was important].

(Agis 2017)

The sensitivity that SRT fosters, and the focus on a self-propelling process can open doors into enquiry as an artist. Emily Warner⁶⁹ concurs and describes how her study of SRT has supported her practice (Warner 2017) and how it has allowed her to imagine alternative points of focus for the body in her performance practice (Warner in Morrison 2016). Moran also notes that 'SRT is a means by which we can access an experience of multiplicity that can be powerfully perused in choreography' (Moran 2017).

We can see therefore that SRT has been of influence to a number of choreographers, particularly certified teachers of the technique, but that it also has scope for offering support to other artists. The contribution to knowledge made by the works in the portfolio of evidence has been highlighted. Citations of the works have been discussed, and the work has been placed in context in the field within which it is situated.

6. Conclusions and suggestions for future work

This thesis is presented as a companion to and illumination of the works contained in the portfolio of evidence. It offers:

- An overview of the context for the works and the wider practice
- A mapping of the links between the works in the portfolio
- The foundations and theories that underpin the practice
- A contextualisation in terms of the wider field within which they sit
- The contribution that the body of work as whole, and individually, make to knowledge in the field

The works contained in this portfolio are key points in a career in dance that spans over a quarter of a century. They illustrate a long-term mature artistic practice and a commitment to researching as an artist-scholar that has an impact on the wider genre of post modern dance, and which contributes to expanding knowledge in the field. This has been evidenced through illuminating how the works offer new insights into contemporary dance practices, and in addition it can be seen that the works themselves are of value as original performances and artefacts. Furthermore, they show a paradigm shift from Skinner Releasing Technique as a dance technique to a choreographic practice and methodology. The research also examines intersections between dance and visual art, offering a unique voice and contribution to the development of screendance practices.

Skinner Releasing Technique is primarily considered a dance technique, and although some scholars have discussed the fact that it has the possibility to nurture creativity alongside this, what that means in practical terms has not been unpacked in depth. In this thesis I have proposed that its reach is beyond fostering creativity for its own sake, and suggest that Skinner Releasing

Technique can also be utilised as a methodology, as an approach to the creative process, and as a practice of choreographing contemporary dance for both live and screen dance works.

The research is ongoing and future outputs comprise further investigations into SRT and related fields, continuing the work that has been illuminated in this thesis. These include:

- Forthcoming showings of the final output in the portfolio *Vis-er-al* (2015) [6] in a number of international festivals.
- A book chapter *Beyond Technique: Letting Go and the Art of Making Dances* (Hudson 2017) which is due to be published in 2018 by Triarchy Press in the first ever collection of writings about SRT: *Skinner Releasing Technique, Emerging Narratives* (Emslie et al). This is a hugely significant text as there are limited resources available about SRT with only a handful of papers and a few interviews with Joan Skinner but to date, no books. There are some preceding writings about SRT as a dance technique, but none that have examined exactly how it can become a creative tool. In my book chapter I illuminate this through artefacts, performances and writing, as well as offering tangible methods for others to work in this way. The new book chapter therefore brings together the work that is presented in this portfolio and thesis, and is a natural next step in the research.
- Various journal articles and conference presentations around the themes explored in this thesis are in progress that examine how SRT can be a methodology for making dance, alongside new research about the specifics of language in the work, the use of image within it, and how

foregrounding process can support practice. These include papers at the International Conference on Practice as Research at Hong Kong Academy of Performing Arts, and Movementis Conference of Body, Mind and Cognition at Harvard University.

- New artistic works that continue and expand upon the outputs in this portfolio are emerging, marking a return to live performance practice as well as an expansion of the digital by working with virtual reality and immersive experiences.
- On-going mentoring support of other artists utilising the methodologies outlined in the thesis is a long-term project and is entitled 'The Artist Midwife project'.

Other research that is currently in conceptual stages comprises a large-scale research project that examines SRT in relationship to neuroscience and includes studies of how the images contained within the pedagogy work on the brain and support creativity.

This thesis and the accompanying portfolio of evidence have examined my own practice in detail, and in relationship to previous and current scholarly thinking and artistic practices. It proposes that the body of work offers new and valuable insights to the communities of dance and art in relationship to choreographic approaches, and proposes that it makes significant and original contribution to expanding knowledge in the field.

¹ Whilst a student at LCDS important teachers at this time were Jane Dudley, original member of Martha Graham Company, Juliet Fisher and Steve Paxton, founder of Contact Improvisation.

² Now known as EDge.

³ 'Contact improvisations are spontaneous physical dialogues that range from stillness to highly energetic exchanges. Alertness is developed in order to work in an energetic state of physical disorientation, trusting in one's basic survival instincts. It is a free play with balance, self-correcting the wrong moves and reinforcing the right ones, bringing forth a physical/emotional truth about a shared moment of movement that leaves the participants informed, centered, and enlivened'. (Paxton et al: 1979)

⁴ Chisenhale Dance space is a small-scale performance venue and experimental dance space in east London that grew out of the artist led X6 collective. It has hosted and programmed many important dance works.

⁵ These teachers included Miranda Tufnell, Steve Paxton, Mary Fulkerson, Danny Lepkoff, Kerstie Simson, Gill Clarke, Karen Nelson, Helen Poyner, Eva Karczag, and Lucia Walker. A specific period of private study with Rosemary Butcher (1947-2016) was possible when I approached Butcher having seen many of her works and taken some classes with her. Rosemary invited me to join her postgraduate classes in choreography at Surrey University, which I did for a year in 1993.

⁶ I saw dance works by Michael Clark, Siobhan Davies, Rosemary Butcher, Gaby Agis and many others. In galleries I encountered the work of the Young British Artists and was influenced greatly by Tracey Emin. I saw Derek Jarman's film works for the first time, as well as Charles Atlas's films.

⁷ Including *No Mean Feat*, directed by Jo Blowers and Simon Whitehead, and in works for choreographers including Gregory Nash, Louise Richards and Gaby Agis.

⁸ Teachers included Gaby Agis, Robert Davidson, Sally Metcalf, Kirsty Alexander, Mary Clare McKenna, Lionel Popkin, Stephanie Skura and Theresa Moriarty.

⁹ The RAE, or Research Assessment Exercise, was a method of evaluating research activity in UK universities. It ran from 1986-2008 and was often criticised. The Union UCU said of the RAE: 'The RAE has had a disastrous impact on the UK higher education system, leading to the closure of departments with strong research profiles and healthy student recruitment. It has been responsible for job losses, discriminatory practices, widespread demoralisation of staff, the narrowing of research opportunities through the over-concentration of funding and the undermining of the relationship between teaching and research'. The REF, or Research Excellence Framework replaced it.

¹⁰ 'The Thinking Body' by Mabel E. Todd (1880-1956) was a groundbreaking text first published in 1937 that became a forerunner of the dance and somatics movement and led to the development of Ideokinesis.

¹¹ Martha Graham (1894-1991) was an American dancer and choreographer who was known as a pioneer of modern dance. Her technique was characterised by contraction and release, and her choreography by its dramatic nature.

¹² Merce Cunningham (1919-2009) was an American dancer and choreographer whose collaborative work with other artists continues to be of influence. Most important of these collaborations was with the composer John Cage.

¹³ The Alexander Technique, was developed by F.M. Alexander (1869-1955) and helps students recognise and 'unlearn' restrictive movement and thinking habits.

¹⁴ Emily Dickinson (1830-1886) was a prolific American poet whose work was often concerned with nature, and with death and dying. Her style was characterised as unusual at the time due to her use of punctuation.

¹⁵ Gaby Agis is an internationally renowned British choreographer, and was the first person in the UK to become a certified SRT teacher. She is a senior member of the SRT community and currently contributes to the teacher-training programme.

¹⁶ Prior to this, the SRT teacher training had only taken place in Seattle, USA.

¹⁷ As Co-Course director for Dance at Coventry University I integrated SRT into the curriculum where it became one of the mainstays of the dance students technique training. In particular on the 'Movement Studies' module which runs through years one, two and three. Students in year two received SRT as their principle technical training, and assessment outcomes included written material requiring observations of how SRT informs their wider dancing practice.

¹⁸ In my role as Head of Movement at Birmingham Conservatoire BA Acting students, MFA and MA Acting students, and MA Practical Voice students all now receive SRT as a core part of their curriculum. I am engaged in on-going research in investigating the supportive nature of SRT for actors in training.

¹⁹ The text from one iteration of a performance of this piece reads:
moonlight sonata and memories of walking on a beach in the moonlight and wondering about versions of that story.
stories- my stories, your stories. our story. his story her story their story

walking and I'm kissing the floor with my feet touching the floor and the earth rises up to support me
 i feel a creeping sense come over me
 i feel a delicate movement running through my skin and my bones
 rolling across a continent of skin and tasting the temperature of the air which has density and texture and knowing
 answers but not always knowing the question
 melting to standing- walking. one leg emptying and filling the other. air around my armpits and around my ribs. finding
 places to balance
 wondering in the spinning if I could spin forever and perhaps I'll spin off the planet. versions versions versions. so many
 stories and so many tales to tell. fast fast fast writing but slow moving and for a moment it seems the journey's never
 ending (Hudson 2004)

²⁰ Dr. Kirsty Alexander is a dancer and teacher of SRT who has previously held senior posts at Middlesex University, Trinity Laban and London Contemporary Dance School. Her PhD considers kineasthetic approaches to thinking otherwise and foregrounds SRT.

²¹ Peake and Popkin are both certified teachers of SRT

²² In Body Mind Centering and Authentic Movement practice that took place with Kerstin Wellhofer, who was at the time assistant to Linda Hartley. Wellhofer and I worked once weekly with hands on practice, writing, and moving to research how hands on work can inform a creative process, in this instance, the dancing body.

²³ Somatics are practices that integrate body and mind and include Alexander Technique, Feldenkrais Method and others. In this instance I was focusing on Body Mind Centering and related bodywork practices found within improvisational dance techniques.

²⁴ Body Mind Centering (BMC) is a somatic practice developed by Bonnie Bainbridge Cohen in America.

²⁵ The Underlying Principles of SRT are a set of philosophies that run through the pedagogy.

²⁶ Zena Watt is a Birmingham based visual and film artist, who had also worked on *Tread softly because you tread on my dreams* (2005) [2].

²⁷ Vivid Projects is a curator-led art space founded by Director/Curator Yasmeen Baig-Clifford which explores all forms of media arts practice, including moving image, performance, digital and interdisciplinary artistic research. It is a collaborative space based in Birmingham and encourages innovation, risk and experimentation in artistic practice and work with artists and producers across disciplines.

²⁸ Including: *Personals#1 & Personals#2* (Hudson 2007), a commission for live and film works during a residency at Ikon Gallery, Birmingham; *when you...* (Hudson 2007), a duet for Katie Coe and David Leahey, that continued the theme of live and film work together; *Gallery study with projection* (Hudson and Peake 2009), another duet with Florence Peake that extended this by using live video during performance in experiments into group work with, *Situations* (Hudson 2011) and a brief return to live solo work in *Measuring* (Hudson 2011).

²⁹ 9evenings Redux was a season of events curated by Vivid Projects Birmingham in response the *9evenings* events in New York in 1966.

³⁰ The Judson Dance Theater was a group of dancers, composers and visual artists who performed at the Judson Memorial Church in New York in the early 1960s and contained amongst their ranks many of the most important of postmodern choreographers.

³¹ Including Katie Coe, Charlie Morrissey, Florence Peake and local independent dancers.

³² Yvonne Rainer's 'No Manifesto' - (to which she rejects any confines to technique, thrill, spectacle, glamour, or assumed space), was a way to state what the Judson Dance Theater wanted; a way to convey the beauty of ordinary movement and the pureness of dance/performance art.

³³ The main reason for this use of film was not born out of any desire to be a filmmaker; in fact my technical knowledge was limited at this point. Rather, it was a way of engaging the viewer in some of the principles and practice of SRT such as kinaesthetic awareness by getting close up to the body with a camera. At that time the choice to work with video had very little to do with any aspirations as a filmmaker; rather it seemed the most appropriate medium to express what I wanted to say as an artist and researcher.

³⁴ Including *Making Lemonade*, *Multiple Body* and *Vis-er-al*.

³⁵ Witnessing is a term coined from Authentic Movement techniques. Janet Adler, founder of the form says that the work of dancers, healers, and mystics forms the ground of the discipline of Authentic Movement, a way of work in which we practice compassionate witnessing of movement becoming conscious. Adler (2003)

³⁶ Super 8 is analogue film launched in 1965 by Kodak that is rarely used since the advent of digital technologies.

³⁷ Mathew Beckett is a Director film maker, DoP, with broadcast and feature film credits including the BBC Channel 4, and multiple high profile adverts alongside creative arthouse works.

³⁸ Set pieces is dance terminology that refers to the most commonly used manner of choreographing dance. In it dancers usually learn steps that are memorized and repeatable time after time. It also means that the same dance work can be taught to other performers in years to come.

³⁹ In 1970, philosopher and Feldenkrais practitioner Thomas Hanna coined the term “somatics” from the Greek word “soma,” meaning “the body in its wholeness.” ...Advocates value the unity of mind, body, and spirit as fundamental to the human organism and one’s inner, personal narrative and experience as a guide for living.
(Batson, G. 2009, Somatic Studies and Dance, International Association for Dance Medicine and Science)

⁴⁰ Steve Paxton is widely acknowledged as the founder of Contact Improvisation.

⁴¹ Authentic Movement is a simple form of self-directed movement. It is usually done with eyes closed and attention directed inward, in the presence of at least one witness. Movers explore spontaneous gestures, movements, and stillness, following inner impulses in the present moment. The witness watches and tracks inner responses to the mover with the intention of not judging, but focusing on self-awareness. <http://authenticmovementcommunity.org/about>

⁴² Florence Peake is a British choreographer and visual artist. She is a certified teacher of SRT.

⁴³ Peake and I came together in the studio to work on a new solo each. We both brought ideas, research and practises that we wanted to explore, and shared these with each other alternating between trying out material together as well as working alone, and witnessing each other’s ideas/images. The duets, *stories from the flesh* (Hudson and Peake, 2004) and *more stories from the flesh* (Hudson and Peake, 2006), emerged from this period of research, as well as a new solo for Peake, and my work, *Let me count the ways*.

⁴⁴ Miranda Tufnell is a British dance artist, movement educator and writer who has been important in the development of dance for over thirty five years. Together we team taught modules on the MA Dance Making and Performance, Coventry University.

⁴⁵ Had I the heavens’ embroidered cloths
Enwrought with golden and silver light,
The blue and the dim and the dark cloths
Of night and light and the half light,
I would spread the cloths under your feet:
But I, being poor, have only my dreams;
I have spread my dreams under your feet
Tread softly because you tread on my dreams. Yeats,
W.B. (1899) *He Wishes for the Cloths of Heaven*.

⁴⁶ How do I love thee? Let me count the ways.
I love thee to the depth and breadth and height
My soul can reach, when feeling out of sight
For the ends of Being and ideal Grace.
I love thee to the level of everyday’s
Most quiet need, by sun and candlelight
I love thee freely, as men strive for Right;
I love thee purely, as they turn from Praise.
I love thee with a passion put to use
In my old griefs, and with my childhood’s faith.
I love thee with a love I seemed to lose,
With my lost saints
I love thee with the breath, Smiles, tears, of
all my life!
And, if God choose,
I shall but love thee better after death.
Barrett Browning, E. (1850) *How do I Love Thee (Sonnet 43)*

⁴⁷ Including: *The solar plexus transforms into a nest of sea sponges, and the limbs trail from that nest of sea sponges like long, undulating sea ferns, and delicate gossamer threads attach themselves to the base of the middle finger of each hand drawing the arms into play*

⁴⁸ A score for performance is a set of rules, or a list of tasks within which there is space for the particular movement material to shift or change. The ‘rules’ for a score may differ from artist to artist. In my work the score may be a poetic image, a spatial direction, a physical movement action. Scoring as a practice in my work will be discussed more fully in Chapter Two.

⁴⁹ Deborah Hay is a seminal American post modern dance artist, who work is widely recognized as having influence on contemporary dance practices.

⁵⁰ Anna Halprin is a key figure in post modern dance known for her pioneering approach and integration of somatic practices.

⁵¹ Including:

- Use of Super8 film in *Multiple Body* (2007) [4]. In itself this has a kinaesthetic textural sensation. It is an analogue medium and has grainy physicality to it.
- Placing of installation. In *Multiple Body*, for example, I placed 3 screens in a box configuration, so that the audience enters inside. In order to see the installation they turn, and in doing so replicate some of the material on screen. The audience therefore shares the physical experience that the performer is engaging in. I also employed this technique when showing *Making Lemonade* (2013) [5].
- Use of slow motion camera- this is first seen to some degree in *Making Lemonade* (2013) [5] and in a more highly developed way in *Vis-er-al*, (2015) [6]. The slowing down of the performer and objects on screen has an effect on the body and breath of the audience. It slows them down also, enabling a dropping into sensation.

⁵² In this instance I use the term Image to mean a picture, painting or other artefact.

⁵³ On putting this into practice, a score for making. Duration: anything from a hour to a year, or more.

How to begin?

Begin with stillness.

Begin with the body.

Begin with where you are at today, in this precise moment.

Take your time.

Take as much time as you need.

Practise letting go.

You may like to run through a checklist from the pedagogy for yourself. Or not. Or it may be that your letting go is instant.

Instant letting go.

Letting go of holding in the body.

Letting go of any notions or preconceived ideas about what may happen next.

Listen to the breath.

Allowing the breathing to come to the forefront of your awareness.

Take your time.

There is time for everything.

Two options:

i. When you feel an impulse arise, begin to move. Any kind of moving, it may be a curl of the fingers, or a roll across the back of the skull. It may be an expansion of the breath in the torso that moves you, or a deep sigh. Movement generates movement. Follow your moving and see where it takes you. You may surprise yourself.

Take your time

ii. An image may arise as if from no-where. Or choose one that comes in strongly for you today from the pedagogy.

Allowing the image to move you in some way. See where it takes you. Follow the image and let it transform into something else. Or not. Let your imagination guide you.

Follow follow follow.

Or these things: moving and image may overlap, may generate each other.

be in this moment

this one right now

and this one

and this one

and this one

Always there is the breath. The breath is our constant companion.

Allowing whatever is there to surface, to reveal itself in movement in this moment.

Letting go of making sense of it.

Letting go of a desire to form it

Letting go of needing to see it.

Form will make itself known in time, of it's own accord somehow. Trust in the Process.

If you get stuck, continue.

Or begin again.

Two options

i- stay with something longer than you are comfortable with

ii- be available to change at any moment.

When you are done with moving, for now, find a way into writing or drawing.

Allowing the words and images to spill onto the page.

Play with not editing, even if it makes no sense, just as in the moving.

It's all the same stuff.

If you get stuck, continue.

Repeat. Or not. On the same day. Or on another day.

Form will begin to reveal itself at some point.

⁵⁴ This concern with the body only being visible, and not the environment that it is in is fundamental in my works. It was achieved in production, rather than post-production, which is of note and important. The rationale for this is so that there is no 'trickery' involved and had to be done with lighting and camera work, rather than green screens or editing techniques. In this way the material is then of the moment, the body and has a more honest kinaesthetic quality to it.

⁵⁵ Mary O'Donnell Fulkerson is a key figure in post modern dance and one of the innovators of Release techniques. She studied with Joan Skinner, amongst others, and is widely acknowledged as having brought the first wave of somatic practices to the UK in the early 1970's.

⁵⁶ Danna Faulds is a poet who specializes in mindfulness poetry and has a long-term yoga and meditation practice.

⁵⁷ Rosemary Spencer is an SRT teacher based in Leeds, UK.

⁵⁸ Including a forthcoming book edited by Many Emslie, with contributions from SRT teachers including myself; various journal articles; Kirsty Alexander and Doran George's PhD, a forthcoming one by Sally Dean, and my PhD.

⁵⁹ Sally Dean and Julie Nathanielsz are both certified teachers of SRT.

⁶⁰ Thersa Moriaty is a senior American SRT teacher who has been part of the certification team for new SRT teachers for many years.

⁶¹ Stephanie Skura is an American choreographer and teacher who was an early teacher certified in SRT.

⁶² Patanjali compiled the yoga sutras, a widely translated text that is the foundation of classical yoga. He is believed to have lived between 2nd and 4th centuries BC.

⁶³ For the whole of 2016 Burrow, Fargion and Glendenning produced *52 Portraits*, a weekly screendance dance piece that featured seminal dance artists, mainly from the UK. It was available online and as a weekly delivery by email.

⁶⁴ These currently include students from Birmingham City University: MFA Acting student Maggie Rhodes whose thesis explores SRT and the ways in which it can facilitate the acting process, MA Acting student Christopher Lowry who is examining SRT image in relationship to the actor. Previous students who have referenced my work in dissertations include MA (Dance making and Performance) students at Coventry University; BA (Hons) dance students at Coventry University; BA (Hons) Dance and professional practice at De Montford University; BA (Hons) Dance students at Trinity Laban.

⁶⁵ Examples of these include:

- *I feel a . .* (2003) [1] being premiered during the Skinner Releasing Easter School at Trinity Laban in 2003 by invitation from the organisers, alongside two other works by artists Florence Peake and Lionel Popkin both SRT teachers, an example of how important my practice was seen to be, even before I was certified to teach the work.
- Invitation by ISMETA (International Somatic Movement Education and Therapy Association) to show two pieces at their New York conference is significant, and I was invited to speak on SRT as well as show to my work. It is an important gathering of key people from around the world from my field, as is Somafest in Los Angeles where I was invited to show work and teach the following year.
- Being invited to travel to San Francisco to premiere new work, *Let me count the ways* (2006) [3] with a subsequent review that stated the piece had 'moments of pin-drop perfection' (San Francisco Daily Starr 2006).

⁶⁶ There are a number of dance artists who are certified SRT teachers who utilise the form within their choreographies, including Gaby Agis, Florence Peake, Laurel Jenkins, Lionel Popkin, Joe Moran, Stephanie Skura and Sally Dean. There are others, and this is not an exhaustive list.

⁶⁷ Ruth Gibson is a visual artist and choreographer who works in partnership with Bruno Martelli as 'Igloo'. She is a certified SRT teacher and is Senior Research Fellow at the Centre for Dance Research, Coventry University.

⁶⁸ Joe Moran is a choreographer and certified teacher of SRT.

⁶⁹ Emily K. Warner is an artist and performer whose work is multi-disciplinary.

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Appendix 1: list of all works

- Hudson, P. (2015) *Vis-er-al* [Single screen work]
- Hudson, P. (2013) *Making lemonade* [Multiple screen installation]
- Hudson, P. (2013) *Making Lemonade#2* [Single screen work]
- Hudson, P. (2011) *Measuring* [Solo performance]
- Hudson, P. (2011) *Situations* [Group work]
- Hudson, P. (2010) *Anna Karenina* [Group work]
- Hudson, P. & Peake, F. (2009) *Gallery study with projection* [Performance, film and installation work]
- Hudson, P. & Watt, Z. (2007) *Multiple Body* [Multiple Screen Installation]
- Hudson, P. & Watt, Z. (2008) *Multiple Body: a continent of skin* [Single screen work]
- Hudson, P. (2007) *Personals#1* [Solo performance]
- Hudson, P. (2007) *Personals#2* [Single screen work]
- Hudson, P. (2007) *when you . . .* [Performance with film for Katye Coe and David Leahey]
- Hudson, P. & Peake, F. (2006) *More stories from the flesh* [Performance work]
- Hudson, P. (2006) *Let me count the ways* [Solo performance and film work]
- Hudson, P. (2006) *Love letter* [Single screen work]
- Hudson, P. (2005) *Tread softly because you tread on my dreams* [Single screen work]
- Hudson, P. & Peake, F. (2004) *Stories from the Flesh* [Performance work]
- Hudson, P. (2003) *Same bed, different dreams* [Solo performance]
- Hudson, P. (2003) *I feel a...* [Solo performance and video work]
- Hudson, P. & Hudson, D. (2002) *Desire Triptych* [Performance work]
- Hudson, P. & West, T. (1998) *watchful, pockets of time, tender* [Performance and installation]

Appendix 2: The Underlying Principles of the Skinner Releasing Technique

1. Grace: the Skinner Releasing Technique has, at its core, the premise that everyone is endowed with a natural primal grace, an animal like grace. Releasing connects into that grace.

2. Awareness

- a. The technique plants seeds of awareness- shifting awareness's.
- b. Awareness is the first step to change

3. You can't make a leaf grow by stretching it

4. Power- gentleness

- a. Gentleness can be powerful
- b. Melting knees are fundamental to all movement.
- c. Suppleness is not weakness. It can release power.
- d. Instant suppleness can become instant readiness. It is as if there is no preparation-
- e. Movement occurs, e.g. sudden supple moves out of stillness, like a snake strikes without warning. The technique encourages the allowing for the 'it' to move rather than the self making the move.
- f. Movement then, ignites space.

5. Autonomy

- a. No one part of the self compresses against any other part of the physical self.
- b. The technique cultivates autonomy- of the skull, arms legs, some actions, and of the breath.
- c. Within the complexity of autonomy, the self moves as a unified whole.
- d. Moving from inside- inner awareness is integrated with outer focus.

6. Essences- listening to the physical self

- a. Sound is a kinaesthetic dimension of Releasing. Tissues and bones are conductors of sound.
- b. Practise listening to the physical self.
- c. The physical self has intelligence- even in the cells.
- d. The technique fosters paring away to essences.
- e. Economy pares away to essences which are pure.

- f. Purity precedes complexity.
- g. Less is more.

7. Web-like

- a. The technique is not linear. A does not lead to B, and B to C. rather it is web-like.
- b. There is no one fixed centre. Everything relates to and counterbalances everything else. Balance is multi-directional.
- c. There is no 'up or down' in this technique. It is 'into or out of' the floor.
- d. There is no change between lying on the floor and moving on feet, e.g., falling becomes rising.
- e. The relationship to gravity is suspended- rather than fixed- with an integration of weight and buoyancy.

8. Playfulness- transcendence

- a. The play instinct is at the heart of the creative act. (Paraphrase, Schiller)
- b. Cultivate playfulness- a light-hearted approach- a high degree of consciousness without self-consciousness.
- c. The technique cultivates transcendence of the self image- to reveal the true uniqueness of the self. SRT does not foster personality. Personality is different from the true uniqueness of the individual.

9. Allowing

- a. Allowing something to happen rather than controlling to make something happen is a major key to this technique.
- b. To allow, one has to practise letting go- letting go of preconception-letting go of anticipation- to just be there.
- c. Allow change to occur in the physical self- change to occur in one's identity.
- d. Allow for the unexpected.
- e. Allow for the releasing of fixed states of being- the releasing of the imagination-
- f. Allow for an image to transform the whole self. Poetic imagery is utilised as a metaphor for the kinaesthetic experience. Since it kindles the imagination, there is integration of technique and creative process.

10. Alignment- transparency

- a. Alignment means more than alignment of the physicals self. It is also alignment with larger reality- webs of energy patterns in the universe.

- b. As the whole psychophysical self grows within this web-like process, one gradually becomes transparent- opening the channel for the life force.
- c. Then one is moved by that life force which is larger than the self.

11. The dance of life

- a. When the technique taps into the natural, primal grace of the individual the movement becomes aesthetic. All movement has it's own rhythm and musicality, rhythm pertaining to function rather than to time.
- b. The Skinner Releasing Technique is poetic. It is holographic.
- c. Releasing dance is a dance that underlies all dance forms.
- d. Everything in motion is seen as dance- even stillness.
- e. The technique involves releasing into Process- Process that is not a means to an end, but the end in itself- the dance of life.

Joan Skinner

Appendix 3: List of performances, exhibitions, partners, funding bodies and awards

i feel a . . . (2003), [1]

Performances:

Patrick Centre, Hippodrome Theatre, Birmingham: UK

Theatre Royal, Lincoln: UK

Warwick Arts Centre, Warwick: UK

Ellen Terry Theatre, Coventry: UK

Trinity Laban, London: UK

Funding:

Arts Council England

Support/partners:

Danceexchange

Tread softly because you tread on my dreams, (2005), [2]

Showings:

Patrick Centre, Hippodrome Theatre, Birmingham: UK

The Light Fantastic, Bristol: UK

Hackney Spice Festival, London: UK

Stratford Upon Avon Butterfly Farm, Stratford: UK

ISMETA festival, New York: USA

MTV flux

Funding:

Arts Council England

Support/partners:

Coventry University, Stratford-Upon-Avon Butterfly Farm.

Let me count the ways, (2006), [3]

Performances:

San Francisco Fringe Festival, San Francisco: USA

The video section of the work was then viewed by over 15,000 online

Funding:

Arts Council England

Private investors in USA

Support/partners:

Coventry University

Multiple Body, (2007), [4]

Showings:

Vivid Projects, Birmingham: UK

Lanchester Gallery, Coventry: UK

Oxford Playhouse, Oxford: UK

Moves 08 Screendance Festival, Manchester: UK

International Festival of Screendance, Brighton: UK

Videodanz Festival, Lisbon: Portugal

ISMETA Festival, New York: USA

Somafest, Los Angeles: USA

Funding:

Arts Council England

Vivid Projects

Business Link

Advantage West Midlands

Support/partners:

Coventry University, Fracture West Midlands, Dancexchange

Making Lemonade, (2013), [5]

Showings:

Journal Dance and Somatic Practices conference, Coventry: UK

9evenings Redux, Vivid Projects, Birmingham: UK

Body, Space, Object symposium, Coventry: UK

Tran(s)mit International Screendance festival, Philadelphia: USA

Funding:

Arts Council England

Support/partners:

Coventry University, Midlands Arts Centre

Awards:

'Best Of' in Tran(s)mit International Screendance festival.

Vis-er-al, (2015), [6]

Showings:

9evenings Redux, Vivid Projects, Birmingham: UK

Mexico City Videodance Festival: Mexico

C.O.T.A. festival Fort Worth, Texas: USA

Global Short Film Awards, Cannes: France

Screendance Festival: Stockholm: Sweden

60 seconds International Film Festival: online

FIVC, International Videodance Festival of Chile: Santiago, Chile

Funding:

Arts Council England

Support/partners:

Coventry University

Commission:

Vivid Projects

Awards:

Official selection in Screendance Festival: Stockholm: Sweden

Semi finalist in FIVC, International Videodance Festival of Chile: Santiago, Chile

Appendix 4: Full statement of collaborators

I feel a . . . (2003) [1]

Video filming: Eeva-Maria Mukta

Music: Justin Wiggan

Witness: Gaby Agis

Tread softly because you tread on my dreams (2005) [2]

Camera and joint editing: Zena Watt

Music: Christopher Hobbs

Let me count the ways (2006) [3]

Camera and joint editing: Zena Watt

Witness: Florence Peake

Multiple Body (2007) [4]

Camera and joint editing: Zena Watt

Music: Justin Wiggan (installation version), David Leahey (single screen version)

Lighting design: Cath Cullinane

Making Lemonade (2013) [5]

Camera and joint editing: Rebecca Pittam

Music: Daren Pickles

Lighting design: Cath Cullinane

Witness: Miranda Tufnell

Vis-er-al (2015) [6]

Director of Photography and joint editing: Matthew Beckett

Music: Daren Pickles

Lighting design: John Constable